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Paul McKeown
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Dear Mr McKeown

Short inspection of The Bishop of Winchester Academy

Following my visit to the school on 29 March 2017 with Ofsted inspector Marcia Headon, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your leadership is based on a very strong moral and ethical foundation that holds the Christian faith at its heart. There is no doubt that improving the life chances of all your pupils is at the very centre of your work. Your inclusive approach, which seeks to support all pupils, even those who find it difficult to remain within the behaviour boundaries you set for them, is something of which you and your governors can be justly proud.

You have created a calm and orderly environment in which pupils can learn without interruption. When I spoke to pupils about their lessons, they were keen to impress on me that they feel the school is a warm and friendly place where everyone 'just gets on'.

You benefit from a very strong governing body. They offer a wealth of experience and they know the school well. They receive good, clear reports from you and they broaden their understanding by working with middle leaders directly. As a result, they are able to hold the school to account well.

You and your leadership team have rightly placed a great emphasis on ensuring that middle leaders are effective. You have developed a culture which holds them to account well and ensures they are focused on the quality of pupils' experience in

their classrooms. Middle leaders feel they benefit from the management structure, which they say supports them well in their role.

In recent years, pupils have made good progress from their starting points and achieved good standards. When my colleague and I went into lessons with you and your senior staff, we could see from their books that current pupils continue to achieve well and that they are making good progress towards the challenging targets you set for them.

The unit which you host, which supports pupils with complex communication difficulties, is well run and meets the needs of the pupils it serves. Staff know their pupils very well and work hard to ensure they can be successful in the mainstream lessons they attend.

A very noticeable strength of teaching in your school is the time and effort teachers put into explaining to pupils how they can improve their work. Pupils value this and say it helps them to learn. Pupils also benefit from the quality of questions that teachers ask. The precision and focus on technical detail in questioning is helping older pupils to prepare well for their GCSE examinations.

You and your senior colleagues have made it clear to your staff that you expect them to know their pupils well and to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. The information you provide to teachers about each pupil helps teachers to do this, and pupils are benefiting as a result.

While teaching, learning and assessment presents a positive picture overall, you are aware that there is still too much variation in quality between subjects. You have plans in place to work with these areas to ensure that they are as strong as the best in the school. When you have addressed this variability, the school will be very well placed to drive up standards further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is very strong. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Systems for checking the suitability of staff are rigorous and robust. Staff are well trained and understand what to do should they have concerns about the safety of pupils. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and know who to talk to if they have a concern. Attendance is also monitored carefully and there are good systems in place to check on those who are absent.

Vulnerable pupils are well cared for. The team that supports these pupils has a broad range of skills and experiences and they have the time allocated and the skill-set to meet pupils' needs. There are good relationships with the local authority, which ensures a strong safety net is in place for pupils who need that level of care.

Inspection findings

At the start of the day, we agreed that the inspection would have a particular focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and on that of the most able pupils. We also agreed to look closely at the sixth form, which is a relatively recent addition to the school and so had not been inspected previously.

- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils achieved broadly in line with other pupils nationally. This is a significant improvement on the previous year when achievement was weak. Disadvantaged pupils in the school now are making good progress towards their ambitious targets. The school's mantra of 'high expectations, no excuses' serves them well.
- Leaders and teachers are proactive in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive the extra help they need to achieve well. Additional funding has been used to reduce class sizes in English and mathematics so that pupils can get the attention they need. Teachers are very aware of which pupils need additional support and they use a variety of strategies to ensure these pupils are engaged and play an active part in the lesson.
- Teachers and leaders monitor progress closely. When they find that a disadvantaged pupil is falling behind the response is rapid. There is a comprehensive system for intervening to ensure the pupil catches up. Pupils feel they are well supported. When asked what the best thing about the school is, they answered, quite simply, 'the teachers'.
- The most able pupils have not made as much progress in the past as other pupils in the school. There has also been considerable variation in standards between subjects. In English, for example, progress for this group in 2016 was below the national average, whereas in mathematics it was stronger. Leaders are already reacting to this issue and have made it a school priority to ensure that the most able pupils achieve equally well across all subjects.
- The progress of the most able is particularly significant since the proportion of this group is increasing with each new Year 7 intake into the school. Leaders have put in place a number of strategies to address the issue. Targets for the most able are demanding and teachers are held to account for them. Teachers of Year 11 are undertaking additional training that focuses on understanding the examination requirements of the highest grades at GCSE in order to ensure they prepare pupils well for the new examinations in 2017.
- The sixth form is relatively new and the first cohort of students took their examinations in 2016. Results were lower than the national average. However, the sixth form is now making rapid strides as a result of good leadership. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that students are placed on the most appropriate courses. This has ensured that very few students drop out of courses and most are successful in their applications to university.
- Teaching in the sixth form is now good. Leaders have taken action to address those instances where previously it was not good enough. Consequently, students are now making good progress. Those students who are re-taking GCSE English and mathematics also do well. Student progress will be further

strengthened when the precision of teachers' feedback seen in the main school is equally embedded in the sixth form.

- The 16 to 19 study programmes are effective in preparing students for the next steps in their education. They are well supported in their applications for university. However, not all students currently receive work experience placements which are best matched to their courses or career ambitions. They also do not have many opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding beyond their subject specialisms.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make at least good progress in all subjects
- students in the sixth form know exactly how to improve their work
- students in the sixth form are given enhanced opportunities to undertake high-quality work experience placements and to access a wider range of enrichment opportunities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Winchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bournemouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, Ofsted inspector Marcia Headon and I met with you, senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils. We visited lessons to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance and the use of the pupil premium grant. We took into account 28 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View.