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Mr Paul Elliott  
Executive Headteacher  
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WV6 8DA

Dear Mr Elliott

### **Short inspection of Wightwick Hall School**

Following my visit to the school with Susan Lewis, Ofsted Inspector, on 3 November 2015 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 December 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You, with the support of everyone else involved with Wightwick Hall, have made sure that the many strengths highlighted at the last inspection have been maintained and built upon. You, staff and governors are ambitious for the pupils and are always looking for ways to improve what is offered to them, so that they leave as well prepared as they can be for their next steps in the wider world. You do not let things stand in your way and look for creative and innovative solutions to potential problems. For example, when it became difficult to find opportunities for older pupils to have experience in the work place, you worked with other partners to set up a charity called 'Work to Work'. This charity, based at the school, helps find suitable work-experience placements and supports pupils in gaining confidence in travelling on their own.

Adaptability and flexibility are key features of the way Wightwick Hall works. Subjects, courses and other opportunities are amended and tailored to meet the pupils' needs every year. Pupils follow courses that suit their circumstances, aptitudes and ambitions and that prepare them well for the future. You put the pupils' needs first and shape the curriculum accordingly.

Bright and interesting displays in classrooms and corridors show clearly the strong emphasis that you and your staff place on developing the pupils' confidence and independence, on broadening their horizons and developing their understanding of the diversity of life in Britain today.

The pupils are regularly taken out to experience adventure activities, to visit museums and places of interest that link with what they are learning about at school, and also to have fun. Back at school, pupils take part in productions and talent competitions that give everyone a chance to shine.

Wightwick Hall is a friendly, welcoming place. Pupils greet staff, visitors and one another happily as they arrive in the morning. The atmosphere is open and supportive. Classrooms are bright and well organised. A good balance has been struck between the ambition for every pupil to do as well as he or she can academically, and giving them the support they need with their personal and social development.

Pupils' enjoyment of school shows in their good attendance.

The two minor points for development that were highlighted at the last inspection have been dealt with. Teaching assistants play a full part in lessons and some take leading roles in aspects of the school's work. Teachers and support staff know the targets pupils are working towards, and track their progress carefully. However, the school has recognised that not all pupils currently reach their targets and leaders are working to make sure that they are ambitious, yet achievable.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the governing body have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that the procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe are regularly reviewed to reflect both the best practice and the most recent guidance from the government and the local authority. The procedures for recruiting staff and making sure that they are suitable to work with potentially vulnerable young people are thorough and well documented. All staff have been trained in safeguarding to an appropriate level and this training is regularly refreshed. Staff have also been taught to look out for signs that pupils might be at risk, for example of radicalisation. In addition, staff have been trained in the safe use of restraint, should this become necessary.

Where safeguarding or child protection concerns are raised, the actions taken are appropriate and carefully documented. Key members of staff work closely with other agencies involved in pupils' lives and with parents.

Pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe as part of the programme of personal, social, health and economic education and in other subjects.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors know where the school's strengths lie and what needs to be done next to improve performance still further. Leaders' written evaluation of how well the school is doing is accurate. The next steps set out in the improvement plan will help to fine-tune teaching, learning and assessment and increase the impact on outcomes for the pupils – moving the school's effectiveness towards outstanding. Your approach is to make sure that initiatives are fully understood and acted upon by everyone, and that they are having the desired impact before starting something else. This means that the initiatives become securely part of everyday practice and strengthen the capacity for further improvement.
- The school's leaders work particularly well in partnership with others as they strive to offer the best for the pupils. This includes work with local mainstream secondary schools and the local college to improve vocational opportunities, and networks of special schools and mainstream schools in the local authority.
- Staff at all levels have the chance to take responsibility and to contribute to leadership. One of the teaching assistants recently led on the school's work to gain the Enhanced Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, for example.
- Teachers set targets for pupils' achievement in all subjects. Targets are intended to be ambitious and to represent the highest of expectations, taking into account pupils' starting points and particular barriers to learning. Pupils' progress towards their targets is regularly checked and steps are taken should anyone appear to be falling behind. Nevertheless, pupils' success in meeting their targets is variable. Some pupils do very well indeed. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points, and for some, progress is excellent. A minority do not reach their targets. The reasons for this are not yet clear; some do better in one subject than in others and no particular group of pupils underachieves, overall. The school is rightly working on refining its procedures for assessment to make doubly sure that teachers' judgements about pupils' attainment are accurate, and that targets reflect high expectations, but are achievable.
- Pupils who have the most complex needs are taught in small groups, staying in their own class with the same staff. Developing these pupils' communication skills is given high priority. During this inspection, staff and pupils made very good use of signs and symbols to aid communication in lessons. While observations in lessons and pupils' portfolios of work show that pupils typically work on tasks that meet their learning needs, the resources used are sometimes more suited to a much younger age group and not appropriate for older pupils.

- Despite the small numbers of pupils on roll and the relatively small number of teachers, the curriculum offers good breadth and choice. Pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects from entry level to GCSE, and to take vocational options.
- Pupils from Wightwick Hall work alongside pupils from local secondary schools in the excellent on-site facility where construction and building skills are taught. A few pupils from Wightwick Hall go to a local secondary school to study hairdressing. Pupils work in the on-site coffee shop, selling drinks and cakes they have prepared.
- The curriculum has recently been reviewed to make very clear the part that each subject plays in teaching and reinforcing British values. The information provided for staff and parents about all subjects now includes a section that outlines the contribution each subject makes. The work the school does to promote tolerance, respect for others and valuing diversity is very effective.
- Pupils in the sixth form are studying courses that build well on their previous learning; where they continue to study a subject, including English and mathematics, after the end of Key Stage 4 they do so at a more challenging level. Strong emphasis is given to equipping pupils for life and learning beyond Wightwick Hall. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said how much they appreciated the support they were given to help them grow up and how they felt treated as responsible adults. All of the pupils who left at the end of the summer term have gone on to college or similar placements.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Several parents who responded to Parent View said that both teachers and teaching assistants know individual pupils well, and that this helps with their learning. All parents who responded said that it was easy to contact the staff who care for their child.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the assessments that teachers make of how well pupils are doing are accurate, and are used to highlight precisely the next steps for teachers and for pupils to take, so that all pupils make the best possible progress

- the resources used by pupils who have complex needs are suitable for their age.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with: you and the head of school; four subject leaders; members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding; the school's bursar who is responsible for the records of recruitment and vetting checks; the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; and a group of pupils from all key stages. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. We observed pupils arriving in the morning and in classrooms during the day. We reviewed a number of documents including records of pupils' progress and the school's plan for improvement. We took account of the views expressed by 19 parents who completed the online questionnaire, and 28 members of staff who returned a questionnaire.