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19 June 2017

Mr Neil Spurdell
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Dear Mr Spurdell

Short inspection of Sheldon School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017 with Ofsted Inspectors Deirdre Fitzpatrick and Judith Mee, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You were newly appointed at the time of the previous inspection, just weeks into your post. Since then, you have established a school that holds the academic success and emotional well-being of each pupil at its heart. Your school policies ensure that every pupil feels a part of the larger community and this allows them to thrive. The curriculum you offer is tailored to each pupil's future pathway and this ensures success for the majority. Pupils are keen to share their enthusiasm and enjoyment of school, which reflects the principles you have instilled.

The all-pervading caring ethos ensures that pupils are happy and able to thrive from the moment they arrive at school. Pupils are very keen to share their pleasure of being at the school and went out of their way to let inspectors know. You are rightfully proud of this aspect. The vibrant atmosphere you have created reflects your commitment to pupils' enriching and positive school experiences. Pupils behave very well in and out of the classroom and are willing and admirable ambassadors for the school.

You are ably assisted by a strong leadership team that relishes new challenges. Following robust evaluation, you initiate systems to make sure good progress continues for pupils. The highly effective governing body is rigorous in its challenges to you and the team. This ensures that accountability is secure and the school continues to move forward in its ambition for continually good and better outcomes.

You have focused on improving teaching in the school so that pupils' engagement in learning is strong. The assistant headteacher in charge of this area of work is a dynamic force for change and the coaching methods used to share good practice are beneficial. As a result, more pupils, in particular the most able, are achieving their potential. There is still further work to do to ensure that the outcomes for some disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are securely good. However, the pupils who have a hearing impairment in the unit on-site are making good progress and are integrated into the main school well. They are given very effective guidance on opportunities post-18.

Another reason for the improved teaching is that the processes for managing the performance of teachers have become more stringent under your leadership. Teachers understand their targets and work hard to achieve them, which has supported better progress for pupils. Your ambition for the school is appreciated by staff and they value your inclusive leadership. As one staff member commented on Ofsted's online survey: 'I believe the headteacher paves the way for the ethos at the school and senior managers, managers and staff adopt it.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. The site is unusual in that the grounds are open and are shared with a neighbouring school so monitoring of this situation is vital. The personal safety of pupils is secure because of the vigilance of the site team, the use of CCTV cameras and effective barriers where possible. Staff are very aware of the potential dangers and challenge visitors as necessary. The school will not allow anyone on site without appropriate badges or similar validation of their role and business.

Ensuring that pupils are healthy physically and mentally is central within all safeguarding policies and practices and is an exemplary feature in the school. Secure systems are in place for monitoring and recording any safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained on how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support the more vulnerable pupils.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on the areas that would be considered.
- Initially, we looked at what leaders have done to maximise the potential of the most able pupils. Since September 2016, you have set very clear targets for each faculty with regard to expectations of the progress of these pupils, especially in current Year 11. Each faculty leader is working with teachers and monitoring their planning, teaching and pupil progress to ensure it is effective in challenging the most able and securing better outcomes. Pupils' work shows that they are more secure in their learning, making better progress over time and are faced with some exciting and stimulating activities. Faculty leaders have extended the targets and monitoring to all year groups so progress is more rapid for these

pupils as they move through school. This prepares them well for their next steps in education, training and employment.

- Next, we looked at the attendance and achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The attendance of pupils who have education, care and health plans was lower than the national average in 2016. The special educational needs coordinator has worked well with families to improve pupils' attendance. In addition, she has worked with external agencies to make sure that the pupils' needs are met in a way that enables them to come to school more frequently and establish daily routines. This work has been very successful and the attendance of these pupils is now in line with the national average. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as good as that of their peers. Many strategies have been put in place but the monitoring of these strategies is not rigorous enough and does not measure impact effectively. Too often, teachers are not ambitious for the pupils in the work set, which means progress is hindered. There are exceptions to this in English, media studies, humanities and science and, as we agreed, this better practice needs to be shared with other faculties.
- You have been aware for some time that the difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others is still too great within the school. The outcomes are improving and the differences are diminishing but this process has not been as rapid as you hoped. You have been very effective at ensuring that disadvantaged pupils have the same experiences as others, especially extra-curricular activities such as trips, and have used funding wisely in this way. You have raised greater awareness of who the pupils are and their particular needs. Teachers are more confident in their use of strategies to improve learning. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support them when it is felt necessary to intervene. However, teaching is not always adapted to accommodate the needs of disadvantaged pupils regularly. There is good practice in design technology where the faculty leader considers carefully projects that are suitably resourced for learners. In the same way, the teaching in English, humanities, physical education and the performing arts is supporting the progress of these pupils. There is still more to do in other subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been a focus as their absence will, inevitably, have an impact on their progress and, currently, attendance for these pupils is lower than the national average. Staffing has been strengthened in this area and has made a difference. The good use of personal support assistants in making contact with families has improved attendance for many. However, there is still a stubborn minority of disadvantaged pupils who are not attending regularly.
- Finally, we considered why boys are making less progress than girls. You and other leaders have been researching strategies, putting them into place and evaluating the impact effectively. In this way, you are providing stimuli to boost boys' ambition. The impact of this has shown a marked improvement in attitudes to learning and progress recently. You have changed the curriculum so that boys can study subjects with the skills they desire for better employment opportunities. The difference between the achievement of boys and girls is not so significant now in the main school or the sixth form so the new strategies appear to be working.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with challenges to deepen their thinking and maximise their potential in the main school and sixth form
- monitoring of pupils has even greater impact with regard to the progress of groups, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- staff maintain a focus on improving the attendance of the minority of disadvantaged pupils who have poor attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and senior leaders joined inspectors in observing learning in classrooms. We looked at a number of pupils' books and spoke with pupils informally on-site. We met with middle and senior leaders and governors.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, and safeguarding records. We considered the views of 175 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 110 comments written by parents, plus the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires of 127 pupils and 61 members of staff.