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26 January 2018

Mr Colin Turner
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Turner

Short inspection of East Bergholt High School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018 with Ceri Evans OI, 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your senior colleagues have led the school with dedication and commitment. A large majority of pupils, staff and parents recognise and appreciate the way you have helped to shape a highly inclusive environment where there are high aspirations that every pupil can achieve regardless of their background, and where there is a determination that no pupil will get left behind in their learning. As a result, almost all pupils successfully move onto the next stage of their education or employment.

All pupils acknowledge the very strong levels of support, guidance and care they receive and they feel highly valued. They are appreciative that staff will go 'the extra mile' to help them beyond their lessons. They also appreciate the large number of leadership opportunities they have within the school. As a result, pupils enjoy school, attend consistently and behave very well. They wear their uniforms smartly and look after the school site carefully. They wholeheartedly take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available. They are polite and courteous to adults and each other.

There is an industrious and constructive atmosphere in almost all lessons. Pupils work purposefully and enthusiastically. They are being taught to work independently and they are able to answer questions reflectively and articulately. They keep clear written records of their learning which will support future revision. Teachers construct and maintain trusting and mutually respectful relationships. You are committed to the importance of a curriculum with breadth and balance and you

have ensured that pupils are able to study a wide variety of subjects which are appropriate for their progression.

You and your senior colleagues have focused appropriately on following the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. You have worked successfully to strengthen further the quality of teaching. You have made sure that the school's assessment policy is applied more consistently. You have developed an effective literacy strategy, which is having a clear impact on achievement in certain areas of the school, including English and humanities. You have ensured that adults other than teachers working in classrooms are coordinated more effectively and this is helping to support effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

You are clear that there is still a great deal to be done if the school is to become outstanding. You have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school and you have developed focused and relevant plans for future improvement. You understand the importance of addressing the remaining inconsistencies in pupil achievement between different subject areas and between different pupil groups within the school. You have enhanced the programme of training available for staff so that, over time, all teaching can be as strong as the best.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have constructed and maintained a culture of safeguarding within the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Pupils all said there are adults in the school they trust to speak to if they have any concerns. They said they feel very safe at the school. Pupils were confident that poor behaviour, including bullying, is rare and dealt with effectively if it does occur. The pupils who are trained as 'SOS leaders' contribute successfully to this culture of support.

The curriculum helps pupils to deal with any risks they may routinely face, including the use of the internet and social networking sites. Pupils reported that the advice they receive does help to shape their behaviour.

Staff training and any necessary updating of staff expertise is well planned and delivered effectively. All staff are clear about the procedures for reporting any concerns. Any reports are followed up with necessary urgency. Staff liaise effectively with external agencies so that pupils get the help that they need rapidly. Information is shared effectively with parents and carers on these occasions, and collaborative working relationships with other agencies help to keep children safe. The school successfully coordinates the care and welfare of children looked after who attend the school.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, pupils at key stage 4 made progress overall which was in line with the national average. They made progress which was above the national average in English, mathematics and humanities. However, they did much less well in a

number of their other subjects, particularly in some of those that pupils chose as options, including modern foreign languages, drama and art.

- My initial line of enquiry, therefore, was to understand the reasons for this unevenness in performance. School leaders accept that, over time, teaching has not as been as strong in these areas as it should be. This has meant that, despite many recent improvements, there has not been enough time to compensate completely for previously weaker teaching and to see the impact in pupils' key stage 4 results.
- School leaders were able to explain a range of strategies which have been put in place to promote consistently positive outcomes across all subjects. There have been changes in the leadership and management in relevant subject areas. New and inexperienced leaders have been paired with experienced and successful colleagues who act as mentors. Departmental leaders have also started to work with subject leaders in other schools within the multi-academy trust.
- The school's own performance information suggests that underperforming subjects have started to catch up, both during key stage 4 and further down the school. Evidence gathered during this inspection was consistent with this evaluation.
- My second line of enquiry was to investigate how the school is working to ensure that the most able pupils in particular make really strong progress. This is because those pupils who join the school with attainment which is above the national average do not make as much progress overall as those with lower starting points. You recognise that this is a crucial group whose attainment needs to improve if overall progress within the school is to be strengthened to become well above the national average.
- The school has adopted a range of strategies to accelerate further the progress of the most able pupils. The school's professional development programme has focused on this theme. All teachers have been required to have a performance management target centred on this priority. Teachers know who the most able pupils are in their classes. They are assiduous in ensuring that the most able pupils master a large amount of relevant, and often complex, subject knowledge.
- However, some most-able pupils reported that they did not always feel challenged in all lessons. This is because teachers do not consistently provide sufficient opportunities for them to respond to tasks which require them to apply, combine and manipulate their subject knowledge. School leaders acknowledge that there is still room for the school to sharpen further its provision for high-prior-attaining pupils.
- A further key focus for this inspection was to explore the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils have not made as much progress overall as their non-disadvantaged peers nationally since the last inspection. The school has introduced a range of strategies to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. For example, the school has created a role for 'pupil-premium champions' in each year, who meet regularly with disadvantaged pupils, analyse what is holding back their learning and share individual approaches to help remedy this with relevant teaching staff. As a result, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils overall improved in 2017 and in some subjects, such as mathematics, these pupils achieved as well as their peers.

- School leaders acknowledge that there is room to strengthen provision even further for these pupils. The information that is supplied to classroom teachers about pupils' individual difficulties is clear and comprehensive. Teachers do not, however, always use this information to construct practical strategies in the classroom to accelerate pupils' progress.
- The previous inspection report noted that governors needed more expertise in understanding information about pupils' achievement, so they would be better able to support school leaders in planning for sustained improvement. My last line of enquiry was therefore to understand whether the impact of governors in sustaining improvement had strengthened. This was particularly pertinent because overall pupil progress, although remaining broadly average since the last inspection, has not improved year on year, and also because governance and accountability structures have recently changed as the school joined a multi-academy trust last year.
- Members of the local governing body and trustees are now notably more expert and experienced in analysing and evaluating information about pupil performance. They have undertaken a large amount of relevant training and are able to hold school leaders effectively to account, drawing on this evaluation to help steer the strategic direction of the school. They have exceedingly high aspirations that the school can improve rapidly towards becoming outstanding. The decision to join the multi-academy trust was made explicitly because governors were excited by the trust's espoused aim to achieve 'excellence through collaboration'. However, school leaders acknowledge that the school website does not yet provide parents with a clear enough picture of the new governance arrangements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to address the remaining inconsistencies in the progress that pupils make between different subjects
- they sharpen further the strategies they deploy for strengthening the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- they continue to enhance the teaching of the most able pupils to ensure that they make progress which is as strong as that of their peers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lawrence
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other school leaders, teachers, members of the local governing body, representatives from the multi-academy trust, and groups of pupils. We observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to a number of lessons, and all of these visits were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. We scrutinised a range of school documentation including: policies; the school's self-evaluation; the school's improvement plan; safeguarding records and information about pupils' achievement and behaviour and attendance. We considered the views expressed in 186 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 146 questionnaires returned by pupils and 75 returned by school staff.