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Mr Robert Ford
Principal
Wydean School and Sixth Form Centre
Beachley Road
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Dear Mr Ford

Short inspection of Wydean School and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018 with Trudi Baker, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained a good standard of education and built on the school's strengths. Leaders, governors, teaching staff, support staff and pupils have embraced the need for continued improvement. Consequently, the progress pupils make continues to rise. You have carefully planned improvements so that pupils benefit from a rich curriculum and provide pupils with an increasing range of opportunities to choose from.

The majority of senior leaders have been appointed to their current roles since the previous inspection. They bring with them the skills that the school needs to continue its journey of improvement and are passionate about improving the life chances of every pupil. The investment in training for middle leaders is bearing fruit. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. As a result of these actions, pupils are achieving more highly and an increasing number of pupils want to join the school and the sixth form.

At the previous inspection, you were also challenged to improve the quality of teaching for the most able and use questioning to deepen pupils' learning. Although these have improved, you rightly note that there is more work to do in both areas. You were also tasked with improving the quality of feedback and this has been tackled well. Pupils now routinely correct and edit their work. This means they have a clearer understanding of the topic and have the information they need to refer to when preparing for assessments.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, particularly those with specific responsibility for safeguarding, are deeply committed to keeping children safe and reducing the risk of harm they may face. They are trained to a high level and are diligent in carrying out their duties. Leaders draw swiftly on the support of a wide range of external agencies, including the police and social care, when pupils need their services. Leaders are tenacious in following up any referrals and keep meticulous records.

There is a particularly keen focus on children looked after. Strong relationships with foster parents and support from school staff ensure that these pupils are well cared for, both in and out of school. As a result of leaders' work with these pupils, they make strong progress in their studies and know how to keep themselves safe.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Required checks are carried out on prospective members of staff and staff have had the training to identify signs of harm. This includes the risks to pupils when online, and the risks pupils may face from radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection findings

- The first area of the school's work we reviewed was the effectiveness of the design of the curriculum and careers advice. For several years, a smaller proportion of Year 11 pupils than seen typically nationally continued to further education or employment with training. You and your leadership team have reformed the range and breadth of the curriculum. This has included the introduction of new courses, including Mandarin, Latin and classics, at key stage 3 that are strengthening pupils' understanding of language and history. You have also relaunched a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including volunteering and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These contribute to the rich experiences that prepare pupils well for their future.
- Leaders and teachers have raised pupils' expectations about their course choices at key stage 4. Therefore, an increasing proportion of pupils now follow subjects which will qualify for the English Baccalaureate. However, this figure remains below the level seen typically nationally. Leaders recognise that this could disadvantage pupils when they apply for college, university or work and are working on raising this further. However, teachers are not yet sufficiently trained to include careers guidance, or relate learning closely enough to the sectors in which pupils show interest in pursuing careers.
- The vocational offer in the sixth form has been expanded and more pupils are choosing to continue in education. As a result, destinations data shows marked improvement in the proportion of pupils who continue in education or employment with training after Year 11. For those pupils who left in June 2016, the proportion is now above the level seen typically nationally. Initial data for 2017 leavers shows this pattern is being sustained.

- Next, we looked at the impact that the pupil premium has on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The recently appointed leader who has specific responsibility for disadvantaged pupils has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's strategy. Actions, such as refining the interventions used, are timely and are ensuring that the progress disadvantaged pupils make accelerates. However, disadvantaged pupils still make less progress than their classmates and other pupils nationally. They also attend less regularly.
- You recognise that there is more work for governors and leaders to do to fully evaluate the impact of this funding and to ensure that teachers plan learning that helps these pupils overcome the specific barriers they face.
- The third area we explored was the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. In a number of subjects, pupils had not achieved as well as others in recent years. The head of the sixth form is driving improvement and the more rigorous recruitment process has ensured that pupils are on the right courses, at the right level, from the start. As a result, the proportion of pupils who continue on their courses from Year 12 into Year 13 is high. Well-crafted study programmes, high-quality teaching and strong personal development for the sixth-formers, particularly the most able, are leading to an increasing proportion continuing to higher education. In 2016 and 2017, around three quarters of pupils progressed to university and all pupils continued into further education or employment.
- We found that most students make good progress and are on track to achieve their target grades. Sixth formers know where they can access support, including with their university applications, and make good use of this. Changes to staffing on some courses, staff training and access to online learning modules are enhancing students' knowledge and understanding in their chosen specialist field. This contributes to the better progress that pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the pupil premium is used effectively to improve the outcomes, including attendance, of pupils in receipt of free school meals
- teachers receive the training they need so that they can better advise pupils on career choices and teach pupils the skills and understanding they need to apply their knowledge
- pupils' academic aspirations are raised further by encouraging more to choose English Baccalaureate subjects in key stage 4.

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

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors observed learning in classrooms, reviewed pupils' work and looked at the school's assessment information. We were accompanied by senior leaders in these activities. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at social times. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, middle leaders and three governors.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 90 parents who responded to Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires of 37 pupils and 51 members of staff.