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26 February 2018

Steven Knight
Principal
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Dear Mr Knight

Short inspection of Christ's College, Guildford

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Peter Fry, 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 February 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as principal in 2016, you have set about tackling the areas of weakness which led to a fall in standards over the last two years. Having completed an honest and accurate evaluation of the school, you have strengthened your senior leadership team, and these colleagues are beginning to gain confidence in their new roles. You have improved the way you track pupils' progress and have ensured that senior and middle leaders are held rigorously to account for the progress that pupils are making. Your new head of sixth form has brought much-needed focus to this area of the school and a review of the curriculum has ensured that pupils are studying courses better suited to their needs.

The information you shared with me indicates that standards overall are starting to rise in all key stages. However, the rates of progress for current pupils continue to be too variable across subjects and groups. The most able pupils are generally making good or better progress from their starting points, but pupils who joined the school with low prior attainment and disadvantaged pupils are making slower rates of progress because expectations of what they can do and achieve are not high enough. While you have introduced a number of strategies to address this variation, many are not yet fully embedded so it is too soon to gauge if they are working.

The school is characterised by a caring and inclusive ethos. Pupils enjoy coming to

school and are keen to learn. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils, and several parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey remarked on the strength of pastoral care, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

Governors know the school well and want the very best for all pupils. They are committed to improving the school and ask probing questions of school leaders. This is also true of personnel from the Good Shepherd Trust who work closely with school leaders to support and challenge them. Governors and trustees have been effective in driving forward the progress the school has already made, but rightly recognise that the pace of improvement needs to speed up.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority in the school and there are plenty of posters around the school to remind pupils and staff of who to go to if they need help. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that record-keeping is thorough and methodical. There are effective systems in place to check on pupils who are absent from school to ensure that they are safe. Governors and staff receive regular safeguarding training and staff who join the school mid-year are well supported in this respect through a dedicated induction programme. Governors check that all processes and policies are up to date on an ongoing basis.

Pupils are taught in timetabled sessions how to stay safe, as well as receiving additional information from outside speakers on drop-down days. While a few pupils say that bullying sometimes happens, they know who to go to for help and have confidence that it will be dealt with. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their children are well cared for and safe at the school. However, some parents, pupils and staff who responded to the questionnaires feel that there is some inconsistency in the way that behaviour is managed across the school.

Inspection findings

- In some lessons, although the most able pupils are given work that challenges them, teachers do not have high enough expectations of other pupils, especially lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils. Teachers do not routinely pitch work at an appropriate level to enable pupils to make strong and sustained progress, nor do they consistently give pupils meaningful advice on improving their work to move their learning to the next level.
- You have successfully evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses and have put a number of actions in place to raise pupils' achievement, some of which are clearly working well. However, your school development plan is not sufficiently aligned to the areas of weakness you have identified, nor does it focus sharply enough on the key things that will make a difference to poorly performing pupils' rates of progress.
- Senior and middle leaders are working hard to implement new strategies. For example, a number of interventions are in place to help disadvantaged pupils,

such as extra English, mathematics and science lessons, mentoring support, lunchtime and after-school clubs, literacy and numeracy catch-up groups and pastoral help from the college chaplain, youth workers and counsellors. However, leaders are not evaluating the impact of these strategies with enough rigour to see if they are working effectively. Consequently, although standards are rising, the pace of overall improvement is not as fast as it could be.

- The school's Christian ethos gives pupils a strong moral compass and staff say that pupils are tolerant and accepting of each other. Inspectors were impressed by pupils' friendly, polite and helpful attitudes. They clearly enjoy working collaboratively in class. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, pupils worked harmoniously together on characterisation techniques. Inspectors saw good standards of behaviour in class and around the building throughout the inspection.
- In lessons, pupils are generally keen to learn and settle to work quickly. You have taken a hard line on misbehaviour, which has resulted in higher levels of exclusions recently. You are rightly insisting on high standards of conduct but recognise the need to seek alternative strategies to exclusion and ensure a more consistent approach to managing behaviour.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- development plans focus sharply on actions to improve outcomes for all pupils, particularly lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils, and that these actions are carefully monitored and evaluated
- staff have higher expectations of what pupils can do and achieve and adopt a consistent approach to managing behaviour
- teaching consistently challenges all pupils and makes them think hard, especially lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paula Sargent
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your leadership team, middle leaders and the attendance team. I also met members of the governing body and the director for schools from the Good Shepherd Trust. We met with pupils in different year groups, both formally and informally, to discuss their learning and their views about school life. Together with members of your leadership team, we looked at learning in a variety of subjects across different year groups. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books. We looked at school documentation, including current assessment information, the school's improvement plan, its self-evaluation, minutes of governors' meetings, attendance information for current pupils and a report written by the school improvement partner. Inspectors considered 65 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 63 written comments by parents and one further comment sent directly to Ofsted. Inspectors also took into account responses from 51 staff and 150 pupils to their questionnaires.