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Mr Neil Mills
Headteacher
Parkside Middle School
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Dear Mr Mills

Short inspection of Parkside Middle School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2018 with Dan Robinson, 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your effective leadership has ensured that teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress have improved markedly since the last inspection. You have worked very well with your fellow senior leaders to develop a positive, ambitious and successful ethos throughout Parkside Middle School. Staff are hardworking and enthusiastic and show great care for individual pupils. The very positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils in the school are central to its success.

Parents and carers are very positive about the experiences provided for pupils. In turn, pupils feel safe, are happy and enjoy coming to school. Their level of attendance is above average and their behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally well mannered and polite.

Pupils benefit from the inclusive and welcoming spirit at Parkside. The co-location of a first school and the unit for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder helps pupils to value difference and form thoughtful relationships with others. The physical environment is attractive and well maintained. Many classrooms are hung with displays that make them inspiring places to learn.

Neither you nor other staff are complacent about any of this. There are occasions when parents or carers have concerns about the progress being made by pupils, or their well-being, and you act resolutely to tackle these. Moreover, you have rightly identified that, in a very few instances, teaching could be better still and that pupils' very strong progress in reading and mathematics does not yet match their exceptional progress in writing.

Governance is very effective. Governors are highly capable and bring a wide range of expertise and knowledge to their roles, which they use to support and challenge school leaders. They are proud of their involvement in the school and resolute in their determination to improve it further. They have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school, and draw on evidence from regular visits, written reports and numerical data to oversee its performance. Governors ensure that they are well trained and carry out their statutory responsibilities, including for safeguarding, very well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is led very well and is a priority for the school. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and know what to do if they encounter any difficulties. They have confidence in staff and speak convincingly about the ways in which they are helped to keep themselves safe, including through high levels of care, available staff and effective signposting to support. While bullying is rare, it is dealt with effectively when it happens. Staff training is thorough and liaison with external agencies is effective. School leaders assess risks to pupils' well-being well. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Information about safeguarding is reviewed regularly and used to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's procedures.

Inspection findings

- During the visit, we focused on safeguarding, the extent of progress being made by pupils, particularly in mathematics, the quality of teaching and relevance of the curriculum followed by pupils.
- Nearly all pupils join the school at the start of Year 5 after receiving their earlier education at other schools. They usually make very good or outstanding progress during their time at Parkside.
- Standardised and external tests show that most pupils arrive at the school working at, or below, the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 8, nearly all pupils achieve standards above or well above those expected for their age. Progress in reading and mathematics is often outstanding.
- In writing, pupils make exceptionally strong progress. By the end of Year 6, for example, pupils' progress is well above average given their starting points at the end of Year 2. The written work in pupils' books, and external moderation of teachers' assessment, confirm this. Writing has been a major focus for the school. Pupils have benefited from its very high profile, for example through the awarding

of 'writing Oscars'.

- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well and make very good progress. Disadvantaged pupils usually do as well as other pupils.
- Teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection. It leads to pupils making good or better progress. A well-organised programme of training has helped nearly all teachers to improve specific aspects of their teaching. However, in a very few instances, some unevenness in teaching remains.
- Pupils benefit from a varied and rich curriculum. It aims to ensure academic success, foster positive attitudes and develop pupils' skills. In addition, they enjoy an innovative and substantial programme of personal, health and social development, which helps prepare them very well for life after Parkside. Alongside topics such as staying safe and healthy, and careers education, this programme identifies and removes obstacles to learning. Where required, individual pupils are referred to the 'Thrive' centre, which offers a comprehensive range of personal and additional support.
- Extra-curricular activities are varied and interesting. They include trips and visits to sporting and cultural events, opportunities to represent the school in team sports, lunchtime clubs, links with business, and music and drama events.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further attention is given to improving pupils' progress in reading and mathematics, and in other subjects, so that it matches the exceptional progress made in writing
- any remaining unevenness in teaching is tackled so that all teaching is of the highest possible quality.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Cladingbowl
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited lessons across the school to gather evidence about teaching, learning and assessment. They observed the pupils' behaviour and spoke with pupils about their learning and their wider experience of school. Inspectors also met with

senior staff, teachers and governors. They scrutinised a range of written and other documents, including information about pupils' progress and safeguarding. They spoke with an external adviser to the school. Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, including taking account of 116 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 51 written comments. Inspectors also took account of 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.