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12 September 2018

Mr Mark Morrall
Executive Principal
Chingford Foundation School
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Dear Mr Morrall

Short inspection of Chingford Foundation School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2018 with David Davies and Andrew Maher, Ofsted Inspectors, 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.

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.**

You and your team have a sound understanding of the school's effectiveness, including the school's strengths and the areas that need to be better. Together with staff, you have created a warm and calm learning environment. Pupils said that teachers are understanding and always give support when asked. They said that they feel safe and that the school is 'really accepting of everyone'. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum, including a wide range of educational visits and enrichment activities, which contribute effectively to their enjoyment of school. Staff who completed Ofsted's online survey said that they were proud to work at the school. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to other parents.

Leaders have ensured that, overall, pupils' progress has been strong by the end of Year 11, particularly in English and modern foreign languages. However, in 2017, the most able pupils, who represented almost half of this Year 11 cohort, made less progress than their peers. In the sixth form, the most able students also made less progress than other groups of students. Improvements are needed to ensure that higher-attaining pupils routinely make the progress of which they are capable across the range of subjects that they study.

You also know that, over time, attendance has been too low and exclusions too high. While leaders' work in these areas is beginning to secure improvements, pupils'

attendance remains below the national average and is particularly low for disadvantaged pupils. Persistent absence rates for key stage 4 pupils also remain high.

There is some effective teaching in the school. In physical education, for example, pupils typically make strong progress in developing their subject-specific skills. This is because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is matched by well-targeted teaching, based on teachers' strong subject knowledge, which successfully extends pupils' understanding and skills.

Day-to-day behaviour in the school is orderly and pupils typically behave well. Pupils are respectful, courteous and usually hard-working. This is partly because of the robust system of rewards and sanctions that you have put in place. Despite leaders' efforts to promote high standards of behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has risen over the last three years. Leaders' analysis of exclusions has not been sharp enough to check that no pupil group is over-represented. Hence, leaders have not identified that pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are more likely than other pupils to be temporarily excluded. Exclusion rates for these groups of pupils are high.

Governors speak of the school as a community and are proud that it is popular among local parents. They are committed and have a strong understanding about some aspects of the school, for instance the work being done to better challenge the most able pupils. However, they do not have a secure enough understanding of persistent absenteeism or the impact of the school's behaviour policy on different groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's record of checks made on the suitability of staff is accurately maintained and compliant with statutory requirements.

Leaders provide annual training on child protection for all staff, including bespoke training for midday assistants. All staff take part in regular training which covers specific safeguarding issues. This includes, for example, the 'Prevent' duty and teachers' responsibilities with regard to issues such as female genital mutilation. As a result, staff are vigilant to signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and know what to do if they have concerns.

Pupils said that they feel safe and know how to report any concerns. They spoke positively of recent assemblies and 'drop-down' days on topics such as e-safety and how these helped them know how to keep themselves safe. They particularly value the 'peer listeners' project, which has provided training for pupils to support their peers with emotional well-being and mental health.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, three areas of focus were agreed. The first of these was the achievement of the most able pupils. For the last two years, this group of pupils,

which represented almost half of the Year 11 cohort last year, made less progress than their peers during key stage 4. Overall, sixth-form students who took A levels made progress in line with the national average in 2017. However, the most able students made less progress compared to students in other schools.

- You and your team have introduced a range of strategies to ensure that most-able pupils are challenged appropriately in their learning. However, inspection evidence shows that these strategies are not used consistently across all subjects. Consequently, the most able pupils are not making as much progress as they should. This includes in mathematics, science and religious studies.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils spend time completing activities that are too easy for them before they move on to tasks to stretch their knowledge and understanding. Teachers' questioning is not routinely probing enough to support pupils to think deeply about subject content or help pupils to develop and refine their own responses.
- In discussions with inspectors, the most able pupils were keen to do well and were positive about their learning. However, they said that they were capable of more and would like harder work. They explained that often the 'challenge questions' teachers set were similar to those they had already completed successfully. One pupil, typifying the views of many, described these challenge tasks as a 'bolt on'.
- Leaders and governors are aware that the strategies they have put in place have not had the desired impact on the progress of higher-attaining pupils. While they have suitable plans to improve teaching, it is too soon to judge whether this work will bring about the necessary improvements.
- In 2016 and 2017, the progress of key stage 4 pupils was significantly above the national average in English. Over time, pupils' progress in mathematics and science has not been as strong as that found in English. Therefore, my second area of focus explored pupils' outcomes in these subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from strong English teaching that is well matched to their needs and abilities. Staff demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use this effectively to set tasks which support pupils to build well on what they already know or can do.
- In 2017, pupils' GCSE outcomes in science and mathematics improved. This was particularly the case in mathematics, with pupils making above-average progress. However, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects is uneven across key stages 3 and 4. Teachers do not routinely make effective use of assessment information to plan for pupils' needs and provide additional challenge when pupils need it. Sometimes, teachers set work which does not contribute well to the development of pupils' subject-specific skills and knowledge. When this is the case, pupils lose interest and are reticent to answer questions. This hinders pupils' progress over time.
- Finally, we focused on exclusions and absence rates, including persistent absence. All three have increased since the previous inspection. Attendance has been consistently below the national average and persistent absence and exclusions have been above the national average.
- Leaders have introduced a range of strategies to improve attendance and behaviour. These include a new reward system and an assembly programme. Leaders' work is

beginning to have a positive impact. Overall attendance has improved, and persistent absence has reduced, particularly in key stage 3. However, persistent absence rates are still high for key stage 4 pupils.

- Pupils appreciate how the new behaviour system has helped to improve behaviour. However, some pupils expressed concerns regarding the fairness of the new system. In particular, they were concerned that only pupils with positive behaviour records were chosen to take on positions of responsibility, such as becoming a 'senior pupil'. This reduces pupils' motivation to improve their behaviour over time.
- This year the number of exclusions has reduced. Despite this improvement, the number of exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is still too high. Leaders have not identified this or analysed why this is the case. Equally, leaders have not identified that these pupils often have high levels of persistent absence. Consequently, they have not routinely put in place appropriate additional support to ensure that pupils improve their behaviour and attend school as regularly as they should. To address this, leaders have strengthened the way in which the school's safeguarding and pastoral care teams work together to support pupils' welfare. Nevertheless, this work is at an early stage.
- Governors hold leaders to account for pupils' overall attendance. However, they have asked too few questions regarding persistent absence and whether all groups of pupils attend school as often as they should. Similarly, they have not challenged leaders on whether systems to promote high standards of behaviour are equally effective for all groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching expects more of higher-attaining pupils so that their progress matches that of their peers
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in science and mathematics is consistently strong
- they systematically improve attendance and reduce persistent absence and exclusions, especially at key stage 4, for disadvantaged pupils and for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- governors scrutinise information on exclusions and persistent absenteeism and challenge leaders to reduce them further.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Robinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection started with a discussion about your self-evaluation of the school, its strengths and the areas you have identified as needing improvement. We agreed three key lines of enquiry, in addition to safeguarding, that the inspectors followed during the day. Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors visited classrooms, observed an assembly and spoke to pupils. Inspectors met with school leaders, including leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with governors and a trustee. Inspectors considered 64 responses to Parent View and 38 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.