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7 June 2019

Mrs Julia Hinchliffe
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Dear Mrs Hinchliffe

Short inspection of Orchard School Bristol

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2019 with Stuart Wilson, 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 October 2015. The school is a member of a multi-academy trust, Trust in Learning.

This school continues to be good.

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

There have been significant changes at the school since the previous inspection. You were appointed headteacher at the start of the academic year in 2017. You have built a new senior leadership team around you and appointed a large number of new subject leaders. These cohesive teams, which you have nurtured, share the same high ambitions for pupils.

Following your appointment, you quickly realised that pupils' progress was not as strong as it should be and have set the school on an ambitious path of improvement. You quickly set about tackling the weaknesses you found at that time and these are being remedied. Pupils' outcomes in recent years have been below average. School data points to a strong upturn in outcomes for Year 11 pupils in 2019 and you confidently predict that progress measures will be at or above the national average. This confidence is supported by the outcomes of external moderation carried out by the trust on teacher assessments, by early results from national tests, and by the expertise demonstrated by the very large proportion of staff (25%) who are now external examiners. Pupils are now making much stronger gains in their learning and are well on track to be making the levels of progress seen nationally. The high numbers of disadvantaged pupils at the school are now making strong gains in progress, similar to those of their peers.

You reach out to your local community in a very real way. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of your work and that of your staff. One parent spoke for many when saying: 'This school has been amazing. I can't believe how well they have communicated with us, supported my child emotionally and challenged her with her learning. Any issues I raise with them are dealt with really effectively. I can see how much each and every teacher really cares for all of the pupils. I could not imagine a better place for my child's education. I cannot praise this school enough.'

Despite the strong gains of recent years, you show no signs of complacency. You and your governors have a very good understanding not only of what the school does well, but what it needs to do to be even better. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. They work well together to check and improve the quality of education through effective monitoring and evaluation and astute use of professional development. As a result, leaders identify inconsistencies early and implement effective plans to tackle these.

Governors are far-sighted and highly ambitious for the school. There is a positive, professional relationship between governors, staff and school leaders, in which governors provide the right balance of support and challenge. Governors understand the importance of holding leaders to account. They are very well informed about how well the school is doing and have a secure understanding of different types of school information. The trust has provided a very strong strategic direction for the school. It has been highly successful in shifting the focus of the local governing board from day-to-day operational issues to one which has the drive for school improvement at its heart.

You and your senior leaders have ensured that the school has made significant progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Attendance, which was below average, is now above average for all groups of pupils. You were also asked to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You entrusted your subject leaders with ensuring improvements in the use of questioning by teachers, in the challenge that they present to pupils, and in how well they motivate and inspire their pupils. They have all stepped up to the mark. Under the direction of you and your senior leaders, they have put in place highly effective strategies which are leading to positive improvements in teaching and stronger gains in learning by pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils are kept safe and protected. All pupils, but especially those who may be thought of as vulnerable or at risk, are kept safe and out of harm as a result of strong pastoral and multi-agency work. Your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) ensures that key personnel, especially the very effective pastoral managers, provide concerted support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Working as a highly effective team, the DSL and pastoral managers make prompt referrals of any concerns, reliably using the school's well-established reporting systems and their comprehensive knowledge of their local community.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Training is up to date, records are meticulously maintained and the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff are thorough.

You have made sure that pupils have access to a wealth of curriculum, pastoral and online guidance that ensures that they know how to keep themselves safe. You review the needs of your vulnerable pupils daily. Staff use the full range of information available to them to focus on pupils with the most need, including those at risk of low attendance.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus. The first line of enquiry considered the progress that is being made by middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have used the pupil premium funding to provide specific staff and resources to support a number of initiatives to promote the progress of disadvantaged pupils across a wide range of subjects, including English, humanities, languages and the open element English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. As a result, school data shows that the gap between pupils supported by the pupil premium and their peers is closing rapidly. Leaders are predicting that the progress measures of disadvantaged pupils in 2019 will be very close to those of other pupils nationally. These predications are supported by the trust and match what inspectors found during learning walks and scrutinies of the work of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers have a clear knowledge of the disadvantaged pupils in their class and an understanding of the strategies used to support them. Strategies such as mentoring of disadvantaged pupils by community volunteers, literacy interventions in Year 7 and GCSE workshops, as well as a consistent push to ensure that high-quality teaching is the norm, have been highly successful in boosting the gains in learning of these pupils.
- Middle-attaining pupils now make greater strides in their learning than in the recent past. Such pupils say that teachers now encourage them to stretch and challenge themselves. Teaching is now successful at encouraging middle-attaining pupils to develop their understanding across a range of subjects, to feel challenged and supported in lessons and not to be afraid of making mistakes.
- The next line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are improving the quality of teaching so that the most able pupils make stronger progress. Our joint observations of the learning of such pupils across a wide range of subjects confirm, as your data shows, that their progress has improved significantly because of improvements to teaching.
- Teachers, invariably, have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject they teach. They use this strong subject knowledge to create questions in class that are precise and targeted well to help pupils swiftly move on in their learning. All teaching that we observed was pacy, demanding and high powered. Teachers

expect much of their pupils, both in terms of work rate and in intellectual demand. Pupils, particularly the most able, respond with energy and eagerness. They are keen to respond to teachers' questions, to make contributions to lessons and to put their all into the tasks that face them.

- The use of questioning by teachers to move on learning has been a key focus of your training and development in the past year. This is leading to benefits. Questioning is used highly effectively by teachers, not only to provide feedback on how well pupils have understood a topic, but to deepen pupils' knowledge and enable them to make links with what they have learned earlier. This is significantly boosting the learning of the most able pupils. Its effects were well displayed in a top set Year 10 mathematics lesson, where sharp incisive questions by the teacher helped pupils to master the problems of quadratic equations and move on to deeper AS-level work in the topic.
- Teachers model the demanding work presented to the most able pupils with considerable skill. They build up pupils' knowledge of a topic in small steps and make sure that pupils are able to make links and see the connections in their learning. In this way, the most able pupils grow in confidence and quickly develop a deep understanding of their work. We saw this in a range of English lessons where effective teaching was spurring on the most able pupils to make great gains in their vocabulary and oracy skills. It was also apparent in physics, where, for example, Year 11 pupils were gripped by a revision lesson on forces and electricity.
- The last line of enquiry assessed how well leaders are taking action to reduce the high number of fixed-term and repeat exclusions seen in recent years. Leaders recognise that exclusions spiked in 2016/17 and have implemented a number of strategies to support pupils at risk of exclusion. This modified approach to the school's 'Ready to Learn' (RTL) behaviour strategy, has resulted in a dramatic fall in exclusions, with current levels below those seen nationally.
- Leaders monitor behaviour data from each lesson with great care and intervene with good effect where this data shows that teachers may need support with managing pupil behaviour. As a result, the number of referrals under RTL has decreased and pupils report that lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils report very little disruption to learning caused by inappropriate behaviour and say that they can 'get on with their lessons'. Previously excluded pupils say that RTL has been effective in helping them correct their behaviour. They say that the strict, but fair, approach has benefits and keeps the school calm.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are consolidated and continued, so that all pupils, particularly the most able, continue to make strong gains in their learning across all subjects
- they further embed and closely monitor the school's pupil premium strategies so that disadvantaged pupils' progress continues to improve.

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 City of Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior and middle leaders, governors, and the chief executive of Trust in Learning. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the trust. We visited classrooms together to assess the progress being made by pupils. We looked at pupils' books and talked with pupils in lessons. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils from Years 7 and 10 and listened to pupils from Years 7 and 9 read. We considered the school's information on the progress being made by current pupils.

Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. Inspectors also looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the central record and examples of recent referrals made to an external agency. We also assessed current rates of exclusion for specific groups of pupils.

Inspectors gathered views from parents and took account of the 26 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and received 25 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 115 responses to the online pupil survey and the 66 responses to the staff survey. The lead inspector spoke to a group of parents at the end of the school day.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Ofsted Inspector