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Mrs Susan Holman
St George's School
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Dear Mrs Holman

Short inspection of St George's School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016 with John Bosley, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your effective senior leaders show determination to make the right provision for the varying and diverse needs of the pupils. Together, you have created a culture of high expectations. You readily challenge weaker performance because you rightly believe that pupils deserve the best education.

You and other leaders have fully tackled the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Teachers and teaching assistants now convey high expectations for pupils in their classes. Individual planning reflects that staff know their pupils very well and ensure that lessons meet their specific needs. This ensures that teachers are planning sufficient tasks to meet the needs of all pupils. Feedback given to pupils by staff is regular and useful. Consequently, pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do next.

Lessons are typically fun and motivating. They prepare pupils effectively for their next stage of education, employment or training. Pupils are encouraged to have an active role in lessons and they respond very well to this. For example, a lesson seen in the sixth form focused on learners' interview skills. Learners were happy to share their own areas for development with each other and discuss ways in which they could improve them. The teacher regularly challenged learners to think more deeply about their responses through careful questioning. Learners made good gains in their understanding of interview skills.

Teachers and teaching assistants engender excellent relationships with the pupils whom they work with. They know them extremely well and ensure that lessons meet their individual needs. Teaching assistants are skilled and teachers ensure they make good use of their expertise to maximise learning opportunities for the differing abilities of pupils.

Leaders carefully track the progress of individuals at the school. You use this information to adapt provision appropriately. You also look at how well groups of pupils are progressing, but do not always make good enough use of this information when evaluating the effectiveness of the school, because some of the ways you are measuring progress are new.

Governors work effectively with leaders to provide strategic direction. For example, they have supported you in making the necessary changes to the senior leadership team, which is having an increased impact on provision. They carry out regular visits to satisfy themselves that necessary improvements are being made. They use the information you share with them to provide challenge to your own work and that of other leaders. However, their analysis of the progress of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, is not quite as rigorous as it needs to be.

Most parents are positive about their experience of the school. They appreciate how teachers deliver bespoke and specialised curricula to meet the needs of individual pupils. Nevertheless, governors have rightly identified the need to do more to engage positively with parents. There are some parents who feel that the recent changes made by leaders have not helped to improve the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' safety is given the highest priority by leaders. Consequently, all staff share an uncompromising focus on protecting the vulnerable pupils that they serve. Child protection policies and procedures meet statutory requirements. All staff receive appropriate training for their level of responsibility. They are all clear about what is expected of them because there is an open culture in which concerns can be shared and followed up. The single central record is well maintained and appropriately monitored by leaders, including the governing body.

Pupils report that they feel safe and rightly believe they are well cared for. They are taught to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils respect each other and socialise well together. They respond positively to the boundaries that have been set for them. Pupils are able to share their feelings and their views because there is no ridicule from their peers when they do so. Leaders have put a high priority on attendance, which is improving as a result.

Inspection findings

- Effectively supported by other senior leaders, you have successfully set high expectations at the school. This is because senior leaders share a determination to put the needs of pupils first and raise what is expected of them. Performance management is used as an effective tool and all staff are given challenging and clear targets. Teaching is now of a consistently good quality as a result, including in the sixth form.
- You have changed the organisation of senior and middle leadership. This has been effective in leaders providing more hands-on support and challenge for staff. This has helped strengthen the quality of teaching as well as building better capacity for future improvement. Middle leaders have been developed well and make a marked contribution to monitoring and improvement work.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding has effectively narrowed the gap for disadvantaged pupils.
- The sixth form is well led and provides a good quality of education. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for curriculum development that is designed to cater for the differing needs of learners in the school. Consequently, learners develop pertinent life skills that prepare them for their destinations. The vast majority move on to further education.
- Leaders have also made important and effective changes to the curriculum and to assessment processes. For example, the move to a curriculum structured around accreditations in Key Stages 4 and 5 has helped better prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are particularly positive. The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are appreciative of teachers' bespoke planning to make learning fun. Pupils are motivated to learn and work hard in lessons. Consequently, they make good progress towards their targets. All groups of pupils make similarly good progress.
- Pupils are given time and space in lessons to respond to the questions and challenges they are given. They are able to consolidate their understanding as a result. Teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to help pupils deepen their understanding.
- Very occasionally, support staff intervene too quickly and so the challenge for pupils is not as strong. There are also moments when pupils receive praise that is too general and so is not as useful as more precise guidance in supporting their learning and development.
- Behaviour is well managed because staff know the pupils very well. Those who present with more complex behaviour have carefully considered behaviour plans, which are regularly updated to meet their needs.
- Pupils are provided with impartial and useful careers advice regarding pertinent destinations. Parents and carers are better involved with these discussions so that they can support the necessary transitions from home.

- The local authority has been instrumental in guiding the school through a period of transition. This has helped leaders gain an accurate view of their own strengths and weaknesses. Advisers provide robust challenge during their highly focused visits. Leaders have made good use of the feedback they have been given to strengthen provision and improve teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment systems are embedded so that they can be used to provide focused analysis of the achievement of groups of pupils
- the governing body rigorously checks the achievement of groups, particularly disadvantaged pupils
- there is stronger engagement between the school and parents and carers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers, your head of interventions and a group of pupils. I spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from Hampshire local authority by telephone. Inspectors made visits to a number of classes, most of which were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and look at work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including lessons, at lunchtime and in the playground. I considered the responses of 28 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 55 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including reports provided by the local authority, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.