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Dear Mr Kerridge

Short inspection of Madeley High School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 9 February 2016, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have taken a bold approach in promoting able, enthusiastic and committed middle leaders to senior positions. The strong leadership team you have created has the capacity, and the will and ambition, to sustain the improvements that have taken place this year and to continue to move the school forward. All staff have worked hard to improve the performance of the school and ensure that it remains 'a good school' where pupils learn well and develop the skills they need for their next steps in education and training.

A higher than usual staff turnover of teachers and leaders in recent years, the identification of significant gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally, and a dip in overall attainment in 2015, have led to significant changes taking place in the school. These changes – to the leadership structure, to systems of quality assurance, the greater emphasis on accountability of all staff and the systematic and detailed analysis of information – are now having a very significant and positive impact on achievement in all years, most subjects, and for individual groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

The previous inspection report identified that improvements to teaching needed to take place. In particular it directed the school to ensure that lessons are not dominated too much by the teacher and that pupils are given opportunities to take

responsibility for their own learning; that teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and extend their learning; and that marking and feedback help pupils to improve their work and make rapid progress. Since that inspection, you and your leadership team and staff have addressed each of these points. For example, in lessons observed during the inspection, pupils undertook independent work effectively and with good attitudes to learning; teachers' questioning was effective in checking learning and in probing and challenging pupils to think hard. The school's policy on marking and feedback promotes learning effectively. As a result, teaching encourages pupils to learn well and make good progress.

Strong links with other schools, at home and abroad, allow the school to disseminate and share good practice and thus bring about improvement. Last year it hosted mathematics teachers from Shanghai. They came to learn about good practice in the school and to teach in the school, and share their own good practice. Their process of planning, delivering, marking, and following up underperformance immediately to ensure no pupil falls behind, was disseminated to teachers in Madeley High School and many other local teachers. Equivalent exchange visits enabled teachers from the school to visit Shanghai and engage in the further sharing of good practice. Learning from such experiences and using key research evidence are important factors that inform the school's improvement strategy.

There is a clear focus on promoting pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and pupils have a clear understanding of the need to respect others and be tolerant of differences. These elements of the curriculum are delivered through assemblies and personal development sessions, and also through other subjects, such as religious education. This is an important aspect of the wider curriculum, but it, and other aspects such as understanding what extremism and radicalisation mean, are not yet clearly mapped across the curriculum, including across subjects where much of it takes place. As a result, those responsible cannot be absolutely sure where and to what extent these aspects are covered across year groups.

You have created an open and honest culture that challenges complacency and seeks continual improvement. A positive ethos and strong sense of community is evident and is well supported by parents and enjoyed by pupils. Pupils rate the opportunities they have to take responsibility as prefects, members of the pupil parliament, and as peer mentors, and the impact these structures have on the day-to-day life and work of the school. Pupils are proud to be members of the school and demonstrate high standards of behaviour, showing care, respect and kindness. Two of the school's core values – 'respect and tolerance of one another' and 'inclusion and equality for all' – link well to its recent achievement of the Stonewall Champion Bronze Award, which recognises that the school is tackling bullying related to sexual orientation or gender identity and is celebrating diversity.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Responsible staff are experienced and there are good links with external agencies. Pupils say they feel safe at the school and parents are confident that the school keeps their children

safe. Pupils say that teachers listen and deal with any concerns they might have quickly. They speak with confidence about how to stay safe in a variety of different situations. As an academy specialising in technology, e-safety is a key focus and staff ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe on social media. For example, at the time of the inspection there was a strong focus on ensuring that pupils understand the dangers of sexting.

Inspection findings

- The school's self-evaluation is honest and indicates a clear and accurate recognition of strengths and weaknesses. It is revised regularly to reflect any changes in performance and is an effective working document that informs the school's improvement strategy. You commission an external consultant to provide rigorous independent reviews of the work of the school.
- Losing a number of experienced staff and key leaders last year was used as an opportunity to refresh and restructure leadership at both senior and middle leader level. These changes, while uncomfortable in the short term for some, have resulted in an energetic, rigorous and evidence-based approach to introducing new strategies that continue to improve the school. It will be important to ensure new leaders have good opportunities for professional development to extend their experience and expertise. In addition, leaders must ensure that new and existing staff feel, and are, well supported so that the current secure staffing situation is maintained.
- Following a focused inspection about the performance of disadvantaged pupils in 2015, leaders reviewed their approaches to monitoring, intervention and support for disadvantaged pupils. The success of the new approach means the performance of these pupils is improving rapidly and that gaps between their performance and that of other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally are narrowing rapidly. Robust development plans with clear lines of accountability for the performance of disadvantaged pupils are now in place, together with improved monitoring and evaluation systems. Regular updates on the performance of disadvantaged pupils in relation to their behaviour, attendance, attainment and progress provide an at-a-glance summary of their performance that is clear and unambiguous.
- Rigorous processes are now in place to monitor the quality of teaching systematically and in a standardised manner and ensure that it is consistently at least good. A comprehensive departmental review process ensures higher and clearer expectations of subject leaders. As a result, performance in every subject is rigorously reviewed and middle leaders are held fully to account for performance in their subjects. Performance management is linked closely to the teachers' standards and to pupil progress.
- Equally rigorous processes are in place to monitor, track and intervene to ensure that pupils make at least expected progress. The systems in place were first applied to disadvantaged pupils but, recognising how successful they were for disadvantaged pupils, leaders have applied them successfully across the school for all pupils. As a result, leaders, staff and governors can see at a glance when pupils' performance is not at the expected level and

can take immediate action to remedy this. Interventions and learning support are now delivered more effectively in Key Stage 3 to ensure that pupils make better progress from the start of their time at the school.

- Minutes of governing body meetings indicate the good level of challenge provided by governors. Their approach is robust and direct. They are provided with detailed reports and clear information about pupils' performance and attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils and other groups. Three new governors have been appointed to add expertise to the governing body.
- Suitable attention has been given to improving the curriculum in mathematics and in English. More lessons in mathematics and a focus on mastery, covering fewer topics in more depth, and using the excellent practice learned from the Shanghai exchange, is bringing about rapid improvement in pupils' progress. In English, revisions to the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and changes to assessment structures have improved rigour and provided greater challenge for the most-able pupils. At the same time a greater focus on literacy is ensuring all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. In all lessons observed, pupils were keen to learn and fully engaged with the activities teachers had planned. Teachers use information about pupils' individual starting points well to plan and support them, and to ensure that they make good progress in their learning.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school reflects the respect pupils have for each other and for members of staff and visitors. Attendance is above average and improving. Persistent absence and the number of fixed-term exclusions are below average.
- The significant changes that have taken place in the school are having a very positive effect on pupils' achievement. Current school data indicate that a much higher proportion of pupils are on track to attain five GCSE grades at C or above, including English and mathematics, in 2016 than in 2015. Similarly, much higher proportions of pupils are on track to make expected progress in English, and higher proportions are on track in mathematics in 2016 than in 2015. Similarly positive levels of improvement are evident for pupils in Years 7 to 10, although the school recognises that performance is not as strong in Year 8 and is taking appropriate action to improve this. The progress made by pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs has improved significantly as a result of new leadership and new approaches. The proportion of high-ability pupils making expected progress is improving in both English and mathematics and, in both, it is now well above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rigorous and analytical monitoring and quality assurance processes that have been introduced are thoroughly embedded, to consolidate and further improve the progress being made by all pupils and to close remaining gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils

- new, and relatively inexperienced, senior leaders have access to effective professional development opportunities to ensure that they are able to sustain their very positive impact on the school's performance
- new staffing structures are consolidated and staff are thoroughly supported in order to maintain stability, motivation and commitment
- aspects of the wider curriculum, including fundamental British values, are mapped more explicitly across the curriculum, including across subject areas, so that all leaders and governors have a clearer idea of where and how this aspect of the curriculum is delivered.

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

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met you and your senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and groups of pupils from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. We joined you and an assistant headteacher in short visits to a range of lessons across subjects and key stages. In addition to responses to the school's own parent and pupil surveys, we considered the 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, the 10 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and the 16 responses to the online staff questionnaire. We evaluated information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour and scrutinised other records about keeping pupils safe, the monitoring of teaching and learning and minutes of governing body meetings.