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Mr Christopher Belli  
Headteacher  
Churchdown School  
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Dear Mr Belli

### **Short inspection of Churchdown School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 June 2016 with Gillian Carter, 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 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Since your appointment in September 2014, you have led the school very effectively. You have the full support of the staff, pupils and parents. You are determined to enable every pupil, regardless of ability, circumstance or need, to succeed and achieve well. The school culture is one of high expectations and positive relationships. Staff and pupils are respectful and polite, and they want to do the best for each other. Your leadership team supports you enthusiastically and ensures that the good standard of education is maintained. Like you, the leaders are determined to build on the improvements and, together, you have the capacity to do that. All the staff who spoke with me shared their admiration for the changes that you have made and confirmed that they are very proud to work in the school.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress. Teachers are dedicated and determined to support pupils in achieving high standards. Classrooms are places that create a positive learning environment that helps to stimulate pupils' thinking and discussion. Pupils are confident to ask questions and seek understanding because they know that teachers have their best interests at heart.

The sixth form curriculum has improved and is now relevant to students wishing to access higher education, training and employment, such as through apprenticeship

schemes. As a result, more pupils want to stay on into the school sixth form after Year 11, particularly the most able. Many of the most able students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These students choose to stay on into the sixth form, and are successful, because of the strong support received in key stages 3 and 4. Students who need to improve English and mathematics GCSE grades are provided with a curriculum that prepares them well for level 3 qualifications. Students are successful in the English and mathematics examinations that they retake in Year 12.

Leaders have successfully eliminated the low-level disruptive behaviour that was found at the time of the previous inspection. They are resolute in promoting a culture that focuses on the importance of education and qualifications as a way to improve pupils' future prospects. This positive attitude permeates the school. Pupils do not want to waste any learning time, preferring instead to engage positively with all aspects of their school life.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

The designated safeguarding lead and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding are trained to a high level. They meet regularly to maintain the necessary rigour and ensure all the required checks are in place. The local authority does an annual audit of the school's safeguarding arrangements and this is used effectively to ensure the safety of pupils and staff at the school. Staff work proficiently with parents and external agencies to monitor and support the more vulnerable pupils.

Pupils receive regular reinforcement of key messages and as a result are fully aware of the potential dangers when using the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils value the raised expectations of their behaviour and achievement that have been adopted since the appointment of the headteacher. They feel that the school is a better place because of these higher expectations and they feel motivated to do well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent now. They are ready and willing to engage positively in activities. Pupils reflect well if they make errors and work hard to improve their learning. They use other pupils, as well as the teacher, to challenge and support their quest for information. However, in some subjects, such as science, the quality of marking and feedback and use of assessment information does not support the rapid progress of pupils.
- Leaders work effectively to improve the attendance of pupils. Staff are fully aware of their role in promoting good attendance and act swiftly when any pupil is absent. Assemblies start with a recognition of the tutor group that has the best attendance for the week; good attendance is rewarded. However, the attendance of a minority of pupils remains stubbornly low.

- The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils from Year 7 to 13. Leaders have established a curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of option choices for GCSE subjects. It supports a successful transfer into further education, training or work. The range of enrichment activities also supports pupils' cultural awareness and sporting prowess very well.
- The individual needs of the disadvantaged pupils are met effectively. Leaders ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent efficiently. They make sure that any barriers to pupils' progress are eliminated and that they have the same equal opportunities as other pupils. Consequently, these pupils are achieving as well as their peers nationally.
- Leaders have rearranged class groups to enable teachers to provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of pupils with different abilities more effectively. The most able pupils are stretched in their application of knowledge and are encouraged to think deeply. For example, in Year 9 mathematics, pupils are considering whether to use Pythagoras or trigonometry formulas when solving complex problems.
- Middle leaders provide regular support that is helping to improve the quality of teaching. Staff appreciate fully the regular training they receive and the chance to reflect on research evidence and consider its impact on their own work. However, middle leaders' work on improving teaching has not yet had time to make a significant impact on raising pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors are well informed and challenge and support leaders appropriately.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Among the many comments received, this one sums up the feelings of the majority: 'This is a good school and is heading in the right direction. The new headteacher has taken the bull by the horns and is driving the school forward with the senior leadership team. Long may it continue.'

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils understand consistently what they need to do to improve their learning
- middle leaders monitor their departments effectively to bring about further improvements in the quality of teaching and standards of achievement
- staff maintain a focus on improving the attendance of the minority of pupils who have poor attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, leaders, governors, staff and pupils. I spoke with an external adviser on the telephone. Inspectors visited lessons to observe learning and looked at the quality of the work in pupils' exercise books. Inspectors considered documentary evidence related to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance and the use of the pupil premium funding. I took into account the 132 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 84 written comments.