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Miss Nicola Jones
Culverhill School
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Dear Ms Jones

Short inspection of Culverhill School

Following my visit to the school on 29 September 2016 with Deirdre Fitzpatrick, 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 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 lead a committed and strong staff team who share your vision to ensure that every pupil succeeds at Culverhill School. Since the previous inspection, you have driven improvement at a fast but appropriate rate. You continually strive to continue to improve the school. Under your leadership, the whole school community is ambitious and aspirational to improve the life chances of your pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well both in their academic and personal development.

Staff build strong relationships with their pupils. Consequently, pupils feel safe and secure. Parents are positive about the work you do to build their children's confidence and develop their independence and life skills. The school is a calm and welcoming learning environment where pupils are valued and their achievements recognised and celebrated. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to learning improve significantly as they experience success and benefit from supportive friendships with their peers.

You and your leaders have an accurate and in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and further areas for improvement. There is no complacency at this school. With your leaders, you have focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure all pupils achieve their potential. The staff team is stable. Concerns raised at the previous inspection relating to the impact of part-time science

teachers have been fully resolved. The school's capacity for further improvement is strong.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and comply with the most recent government guidelines. The school's single central record is maintained accurately. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in the school. You and your safeguarding leader are tenacious in your approaches to following up concerns. Staff ensure that pupils and their families receive the support and care they need. This includes effective support for those pupils with mental health needs. Parents say you 'go above and beyond' for their children. Staff are recruited safely and are well trained to recognise and act on signs of risk or harm. For example, they have received training to identify possible child sexual exploitation and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. This rigorous approach ensures that pupils are kept safe at Culverhill School.

Pupils are effectively supervised at the start and end of each day. Staff ensure that their safety is not compromised by the many buses which come and go onto the school site at these peak times. The school's personal, social, health and economic education programme successfully teaches pupils how to stay safe online. Pupils are knowledgeable about potential dangers of the internet. In addition, they have absolute trust in their teachers to support them with personal concerns such as friendship or bullying issues. During the inspection, local fire fighters spoke to pupils about the dangers of fire. The school's robust systems and actions contribute positively to keeping pupils safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, you have focused relentlessly on continuing to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff have risen to the increased expectations and now deliver lessons which consistently engage and interest the pupils. Effective training has contributed well to the improvements made. For example, teachers use high-quality questions to deepen learning and extend pupils' understanding. Your monitoring of teaching and learning demonstrates that improved teaching is having a positive impact on the good progress pupils make, both in their academic and personal development. Nonetheless, leaders have identified opportunities for staff, including teaching assistants, to extend and challenge pupils in lessons further to deepen their learning and ensure outcomes are consistently high.
- Staff are skilled in checking pupils' progress. They use this information to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and personal skills. Teachers use this knowledge to plan work which meets their specific needs. For example, pupils in Year 9 worked in pairs in science enthusiastically to discuss the attributes of different animals they knew. Making learning

relevant and interesting in this way is resulting in strong outcomes for pupils.

- Pupils behave well in lessons and in break and lunchtimes. Learning is characterised by high levels of pupils' engagement and enjoyment in the work they are doing. They quickly develop a thirst for learning as a result of the well-planned and interesting lessons that teachers plan for them. Structures in place such as visual timetables and clear reward systems support effective learning and personal development. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and ensure that appropriate support is in place following the rare incidents which do occur. However, leaders confirm the need to evaluate and record these incidents in greater depth to identify the triggers and patterns in pupils' behaviour. In addition, leaders do not always record pupil voice following an incident. This limits opportunities to use recorded information strategically to inform and improve behaviour management approaches.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively and makes a positive contribution to their understanding of British values such as friendship, respect and democracy. Pupils have benefited from a visit from their local Member of Parliament to discuss how democracy works. In addition, they followed the Paralympic Games to learn that 'everyone is allowed to be who they are'.
- The leadership of mathematics is strong. As pupils build their skills and understanding, their outcomes improve. Pupils achieve strong outcomes at the end of Year 11 and make rapid progress. Teachers plan work carefully, setting individual targets for pupils to achieve. In particular, the disadvantaged pupils, including those who are the most able, make even better progress than their peers as a result of the strong focus on meeting the needs of this group of pupils.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing is supporting pupils to make good progress. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 develop their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) effectively to learn to read. Often, they have joined the school with weak reading skills and make good progress as a result of effective teaching. As pupils move up through the school, they read with increasing fluency and understanding. The most able pupils read more complex texts to the inspectors with enjoyment, discussing their favourite authors and books. In addition, teachers use relevant and appropriate texts to engage pupils to write effectively. Work in books confirms pupils use their precise individual targets to help them write increasingly complex sentences. Teachers' constructive feedback also helps pupils to know how to improve their work successfully. As a result, most pupils make expected progress and a good proportion make better than expected progress from their starting points. However, leaders continue to focus on improving pupils' achievement and progress in writing further.
- Leaders have developed a highly appropriate and effective curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils. Staff plan interesting lessons in a broad range of subjects, such as art and design technology, to ensure that pupils achieve well across the curriculum. In addition, they focus on developing pupils' life skills through the effective implementation of vocational studies. This ensures

that pupils are very well prepared to access the next stage of their education, training or employment. For example, pupils spoke with pride when discussing their plans for college. They say that they have learned to be independent. In addition, they have developed the confidence that they will be accepted for who they are and respected by their peers.

- Governance is strong and has successfully ensured that the school continues to improve. Governors receive in-depth information from leaders. Nonetheless, they visit the school regularly to find out for themselves the impact of actions taken to improve the school's performance. They challenge leaders without fear or favour, not accepting any underperformance. In discussions, governors demonstrate a deep understanding of pupils' outcomes, including those of the most vulnerable pupils and the disadvantaged pupils. However, staff report governors also offer sensitive and high-quality support to enable them to do their job effectively. As a result, effective governance has been instrumental in ensuring the school continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all lessons challenge pupils so that they make the best possible progress, regardless of their starting points, and particularly in writing
- leaders develop a more strategic approach to evaluating the small number of incidents which occur.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other school leaders, and a group of governors. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors visited lessons, accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and learning. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and discussed their achievements with senior leaders. They took account of 15 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and five responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, assessment information about the achievement and outcomes of pupils, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry.

1. How effective have leaders and governors been in sustaining and improving the school's performance since the previous inspection?
2. Has the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remained at least good, including in science, to ensure all pupils are challenged, achieve well and make good progress from their starting points?
3. How well does the school teach key skills in English and mathematics? Are teachers, including those who are part time, using the information they keep on pupils' learning and achievement to plan work which suitably challenges them?
4. Is the culture of safeguarding strong? Do pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe? Has the good practice found at the previous inspection been maintained and improved further?
5. Is the school's capacity for further improvement strong? Leaders state that the school is moving towards outstanding. Also governors are building leadership capacity. Is the school well placed to move forward?