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Dear Mr Foulds

Short inspection of Cheltenham Bournside School and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2016 with Martyn Groucutt, 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 previous inspection.

You, other senior leaders and governors provide the school with strong leadership. The school's vision for 'every student to become the best they can be' can be seen in the quality of care for all pupils, the level of support for the most vulnerable and the refusal to accept underperformance in any aspect of the school's work. Pupils share this vision. They are polite and respectful, behave well and show good attitudes to their learning. They wear the school's uniform with pride and believe that the school is a 'great place to learn'. The very large majority of parents believe that their children are taught well and make good progress. They report that they are well informed about how well their children are doing. Nine out of 10 parents would recommend the school to other parents.

Since the previous inspection in May 2012, while pupils' overall attainment in GCSE examinations remained in line with or above the national average, you recognised that this masked weaknesses in performance in some key subjects and for particular groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. The continuous work you, other senior leaders and governors have undertaken since then has led to much improvement in the outcomes for 2016. These improvements can be seen in the quality of pupils' work currently in the school in all year groups. The strengths noted in 2012 have been sustained, such as the very positive working relationships between pupils and teachers, pupils' enjoyment of their learning and their

behaviour. There are also ongoing strengths in pupils' achievement in a range of subjects, including the humanities. The previous inspection report stated that the most able pupils needed to be challenged more to increase their rate of progress. Current pupils' work in a wide range of subjects and year groups shows that this has been addressed well. The sixth form was judged to be satisfactory in 2012. It has improved and continues to improve under the strong leadership of the sixth form leader, although some work is still required to reduce the variations in students' achievement in a small minority of subjects.

The procedures for monitoring the performance of the school, including pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and subject leadership, and progress against the strategic plan, are thorough. This improvement point from the May 2012 inspection has been addressed comprehensively. These arrangements provide you and other leaders, as well as governors, with an accurate picture of what is working well, what needs some refinement and where more substantial change might be required. Just one example of this is your response to the questions this inspection raised about whether the most effective use was being made of the one hour and 40 minutes pupils spend each week in tutorial time. You were able to present your own analysis of this and of the actions already taken to ensure that best use is made of this time.

There is a good breadth and depth of expertise on the governing body. This enables governors to provide a good balance of support and challenge to you and other school leaders. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas that could be improved further. They confidently scrutinise your analysis of achievement and other data to determine the challenging questions that hold you to account very well. They ensure that they have a wide breadth of first-hand information through their close involvement in all aspects of the school's work and through regular formal and informal meetings with staff, pupils and parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the school's leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date, meet requirements and are fit for purpose and all records are detailed and of high quality.

The school leadership team, supported well by governors, has created an effective culture and harmonious community, building on the school's ethos and values, that keeps pupils safe. Effective procedures ensure that the safety of all pupils is paramount. The overwhelming majority of parents believe that their children are cared for well in the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school; more than half say that they feel safe all of the time and the others for most of the time. Pupils say that they know what they need to do to keep themselves safe. Teachers also strongly agree that pupils are safe at the school. Frequent analysis of all relevant information, such as absence data and records of incidents, is undertaken by senior staff and governors to spot any potential safeguarding or child protection concerns. The link safeguarding governor has frequent meetings with the designated

safeguarding lead to monitor the effectiveness of arrangements. Regular detailed and evaluative reports are provided for the full governing body.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is often exemplary, and rarely less than good. The site is very crowded and, given the number of pupils in the school, there is very little space at break and lunchtimes. During these times, and during lesson changeovers, pupils behave in a safe, sensible, calm and orderly manner. They move promptly to lessons and arrive ready to learn. A good programme of personal, social, health and economic education means that they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and to cope with the range of risks they can be exposed to. They know what to do if they have any concerns.

The overwhelming majority of pupils believe that bullying is rare and, on the few occasions it occurs, they know what to do and feel that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Younger pupils value and respect the Year 10 anti-bullying ambassadors. This is supported by the views of parents. However, more needs to be done to assure all pupils that incidents are followed through thoroughly, their views are fully taken into account and that all teachers are clear about their role in supporting the pupils.

All staff are fully aware of all aspects of safeguarding as a result of regular and effective training. They have a good understanding of how to spot the 'triggers' that can lead to concerns about individuals and groups of pupils. They are secure in their understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and are alert to the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Students in the sixth form have a good understanding of all safeguarding issues at an appropriately mature level.

Inspection findings

- The school's assessment information and analysis of 2016 GCSE examination results show that the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils in the school and the national data for pupils who are not disadvantaged reduced significantly by the end of the last academic year. This is confirmed by the quality of these pupils' work across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects, including in English. The work in English and history of a group of the most able disadvantaged pupils in Year 9 shows that they are making strong progress.
- Teachers are fully aware of the disadvantaged pupils in their classes and current information on their progress. They mostly use this well to plan for these pupils. Teachers also have access to information about potential barriers to individual pupils' learning and about what strategies have been tried to help them; what has been successful and what has not. This information is not yet used effectively by all teachers.
- The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved significantly and is now close to the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics was not good enough in 2014 and 2015. You recognised these weaknesses and conducted useful external

reviews that led to high-quality support for the department. As a result, there was significant improvement in 2016. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils improved markedly when compared with others who are not disadvantaged nationally. These improvements can also be seen clearly for pupils currently in the school and are being sustained in all year groups.

- Pupils who join the school with the lowest attainment sometimes find the work that they are set in mathematics too difficult and do not make secure progress. This was also seen for some pupils in science, but not in other subjects.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved steadily over three years. They are supported well in lessons and make good progress. Their reading improves as a result of well-targeted support.
- Pupils enjoy science and take a full and active part in lessons. The quality of the work in their books shows much improved progress. The most able pupils, who mostly follow courses in the three separate sciences, are doing well. However, while pupils in the core science groups can, for example, complete complex calculations on energy transfers in Year 10, discussions with them show that their understanding of the key scientific ideas underpinning this work is insecure. Their scientific reasoning skills are underdeveloped.
- Much of the work seen in languages shows pupils making much improved progress. Many are confident in using the language in conversations.
- The large majority of students in the sixth form complete their 16–19 study programmes successfully. The school provides mainly academic A- and AS-level courses. Those students who leave at the end of Year 12 transfer to vocational courses or to an apprenticeship. Leaders are working to improve students' understanding of these routes in pre-16 careers guidance.
- Achievement in a wide range of subjects, including English, history, economics, law and physical education remains high. Previously, students with similar starting points (average GCSE grades) achieved widely different outcomes in, for example, science subjects, mathematics and psychology due to weaknesses in teaching or subject leadership. These weaknesses have been tackled and 2016 results and the work of current students shows that the number of subjects concerned has reduced and the spread of outcomes in others has narrowed. The underperformance in drama has been dealt with successfully. However, the sixth form leader recognises that more still needs to be done in some subjects.
- The highly inclusive ethos of the school continues into the sixth form. Students with a wide range of starting points who show the potential to make good progress are accepted. Previously, the progress made by those with the lowest starting points was not as good as that of more able students. In most subjects, these students now receive better-focused support and current students are mostly doing well. The progress made by those students who need to re-sit English and/or mathematics improved significantly in 2016.

- The sixth form prepares students well for their next steps, as shown by the detailed analysis of destination information. A good proportion progress to higher education but, increasingly, apprenticeships are seen as an equally valuable alternative.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make more effective use of the information they have about individual disadvantaged pupils to provide them with targeted support in lessons as necessary
- pupils with low prior attainment are set work in mathematics and science that challenges them, but is achievable
- the variations in students' achievement in the sixth form are reduced further.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

There has been no change in the academy's status since the previous inspection in May 2012. Cheltenham Bournside is still a convertor academy with around 1,650 pupils overall and almost 400 in the sixth form. Many Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form, but around one third of students join from other schools. The headteacher was seconded from the school for the last academic year. During this period, the school was run by the associate headteacher. The chair of the governing body is still in post. There has been stability in the membership of the governing body and in staffing.

Inspectors spent most of their time in lessons accompanied by the school's senior leaders, looking at pupils' work and talking with them about it. They also looked at further samples of pupils' work and listened to some pupils read during lessons and in tutorial sessions. They looked at school leaders' analysis of achievement information and other documents, including the strategic plan and improvement plans. They held discussions with the headteacher, associate headteacher and other senior leaders and with the chair and two other governors. A formal meeting was held with a group of pupils and inspectors had informal discussions with many others. Inspectors took account of the 309 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey), the 55 responses to the online staff survey and 180 responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspectors agreed with the headteacher and associate headteacher that the inspection would focus on the achievement of pupils currently in the school across a range of year groups and subjects, but looking closely at mathematics. There was a particular focus on the achievement of specific groups of pupils across all subjects: those pupils who are disadvantaged; the most able pupils; those with low prior attainment; and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the sixth form, it was agreed that inspectors would explore why there was variation in the achievement of students across a range of subjects and why students with similar starting points achieved widely different outcomes in a number of subjects.