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Mr Andrew Beaumont
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Dear Mr Beaumont

Short inspection of Woodbridge High School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 2016 with Gerard Strong, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance. You use your precise analysis of information and consider the views of pupils, staff and parents when planning further developments. This is leading to better consistency in the quality of teaching and consequently improving pupils' outcomes. Most notably, since the last inspection, students make more progress on 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders have worked effectively to secure better attendance in the sixth form. More effective advice and guidance are now available for pupils in Year 11 when they make their decisions about which courses they will take.

Since the last inspection you have rightly focused upon addressing the identified areas for improvement, including improving middle leaders' role in securing higher standards. The turnaround in geography GCSE outcomes in the past two years is an example of middle leaders' improved effectiveness. Across subjects, teachers now consistently follow the school's assessment procedures to provide pupils with useful feedback that is closely linked to their targets. Consequently, pupils understand what they need to do in order to improve. Where the few weaknesses in teaching remain, a comprehensive programme quickly identifies areas for development and provides bespoke support.

Pupils' progress is improving. Nevertheless, you recognise that some particular groups of pupils still underperform. For example, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, have historically made weaker progress than others nationally, and boys' progress has been slower than that of girls. Interventions, including sixth-form mentoring, are improving disadvantaged pupils' progress but the pace is slow for some. Leaders also recognise that ensuring that pupils' attendance and behaviour consistently meet your high standards is a crucial part of helping pupils succeed.

Overall, pupils' attendance continues to improve and new strategies, including the use of the 'focus room', are improving pupils' behaviour. Year coordinators have a precise view of where strategies are leading to improvements and where attendance and behaviour need further work, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The recently introduced breakfast club is an example of leaders' response to improve more quickly disadvantaged pupils' attendance.

The school community is a harmonious environment where pupils tend to get along and are happy. The school promotes a range of events such as Black History Month and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender week. This demonstrates leaders' commitment to raising pupils' awareness and enhancing their personal development and welfare, including their tolerance and respect for others.

Safeguarding is effective

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that statutory policies are up to date and staff adhere consistently to school procedures for keeping pupils safe. Regular training, including for governors, has equipped the school well to deal with emerging issues. Work with the local authority and other external agencies has ensured that timely and appropriate referrals are made and that school systems are robust. This includes pre-employment checks made on staff and the recording of these checks. Pupils know who their 'go to' staff are, and can refer quickly to what they have been taught about personal safety when making decisions. Topics in assemblies and life studies lessons build upon opportunities in lessons to help pupils understand risk and promote fundamental British values. This work has developed pupils' knowledge and understanding of e-safety, radicalisation and the 'Prevent' duty, and issues concerning the local community. Parents, staff and pupils agree that the school is a safe community.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' analysis of the school's performance is grounded well in a precise understanding of all available information and attention given to feedback from the school community. As a result, improvements have laid the groundwork for further developments. Where improvements have not been as rapid as leaders want, they are quick to review what is not working in order to make the necessary changes.

- Pupils' outcomes are improving. Successive year groups make better progress as a result of more effective and consistent teaching across most subjects. Provisional GCSE outcomes show that pupils made expected progress overall, with some subjects, such as English and mathematics, performing better. Progress in the sixth form was strong and current information indicates a consistent picture.
- Pupils receive high-quality teaching in most lessons, which accelerates their progress, particularly in 16 to 19 study programmes in the sixth form.
- In 2015, less-able girls underperformed. As a result of leaders' prompt identification of this issue and effective whole-school interventions, lower-prior-attaining girls made much stronger progress last year.
- The most able pupils' performance was broadly in line with national expectations last year. However, the most able boys, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, underperform compared with girls. Leaders recognise that while teachers often plan to meet the needs of boys and the most able pupils overall, they do not regularly meet the needs of disadvantaged most-able boys. As a result, these pupils are not stretched enough and their progress is too slow.
- Disadvantaged pupils' performance, including their progress and attendance, has been weaker than that of others nationally. Leaders' work to improve this is resulting in some gains; however, differences remain. Disadvantaged boys and the most able disadvantaged pupils are not supported well enough to ensure that they make consistently good or better progress.
- A well-skilled team closely monitors pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and teachers who plan to meet those pupils' needs. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and the inclusion centre is well equipped to support pupils' pastoral needs.
- Overall attendance and behaviour have continued to improve since the last inspection and Ofsted visit. Girls' attendance in particular has improved. New strategies to support disadvantaged pupils' attendance are working and building upon existing robust monitoring and follow-up procedures.
- Enrichment activities are well organised and pay attention to pupils' needs. For example, monitoring of activities ensures that disadvantaged pupils have access to these activities. The 'brilliant club' is specifically focused upon raising aspirations and creating opportunities for the most able to explore their future options. Such opportunities are highly valued; pupils told inspectors that they would enjoy more experiences like this.
- Pupils have opportunities to read during the school day and are encouraged to borrow books from the library. Library rentals are monitored closely so that pupils are guided in their choices. Pupils who require additional support with their reading make strong progress and read confidently. Inspectors noted that the whole-school policy for literacy was well embedded across the curriculum. They also found this to be the case with the school's numeracy strategy.
- Leaders agree that despite the overall continued improvements, too often, poor attendance and behaviour are demonstrated by disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. New strategies to address this have yet to have full impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able and boys, improve quickly by ensuring that teachers consistently plan activities that accelerate their progress
- systems and procedures are embedded to further improve pupils' attendance and behaviour, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- how the school supports the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, across the curriculum
- how leaders are sustaining and improving pupils' attendance and behaviour, particularly where there is some variation between groups of pupils
- what is being done to support lower-prior-attaining girls' and the most able boys' progress and attainment.

In order to explore these areas, inspectors:

- met with staff, governors, a representative from the local authority and pupils
- visited 13 lessons with leaders and scrutinised pupils' work
- listened to pupils read
- scrutinised school documentation, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and development planning; procedures and policies; assessment and behaviour information; and internal and external reviews of the school's performance
- considered the views expressed by 149 parents, 110 staff and 66 pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys.