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Mr Paul Kilbride
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Dear Mr Kilbride

Short inspection of Old Swinford Hospital

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017 with Her Majesty's Inspector Alun Williams, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, supported by a highly effective senior team, have an accurate, honest and reflective view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This, coupled with a determination that the school should improve rapidly, has led to outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 in 2016 which were extremely strong and significantly above the national average. Pupils made this strong progress and achieved high standards across all prior ability groups and a range of subjects at key stage 4. Where weaknesses exist, for example in the curriculum, you have taken rapid action to make sure that you offer subjects which meet the needs of the wide range of pupils in the school.

You have ensured that, alongside academic success, pupils benefit from the 'co-curriculum' that offers them a range of vibrant and valuable experiences. Many pupils take part in the activities on offer and speak very highly of the positive impact they have on them.

Old Swinford Hospital is very well respected by pupils, students and parents alike. The great majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to other parents. For example, one parent said: 'My son really enjoys every aspect of school life and I, as a parent, feel that he receives excellent care and education.'

Parents particularly value your leadership of the school and the changes you have recently made. For example, one parent commented: 'Mr Kilbride is a very visible and enthusiastic leader who has made many positive changes to the school since he joined.' Another said: 'Mr Kilbride is an inspiration to the school. His energy and foresight, his moral view of the world and genuine desire to get the best from every child are impressive. He will support every child and is fair, but is no pushover, and we are pleased that he is not slow to discipline when necessary.' These views are representative of many others offered to inspectors.

At the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with improving the quality of teaching, developing the curriculum at both key stage 4 and 5 so that it meets the needs of all pupils and tracking pupils' progress more effectively. You have tackled these areas very well.

The quality of teaching in the school now leads to very strong outcomes at key stage 4 and progress is in line with national averages at key stage 5. Teachers are beginning to share the best practice across departments and the level of challenge for all pupils, especially the most able, is good and continuing to improve. A programme of team-teaching and shadowing, teacher exchange and masterclasses is effectively developing teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills.

You have developed the curriculum so that all pupils study a set of subjects and have opportunities that are appropriate for them. You have increased the flexibility for some pupils to have a smaller number of option subjects. This means that these pupils are focusing more closely on their core literacy and numeracy skills to ensure that they have strong foundations for later success. You have also effectively developed cross-curricular experiences so that pupils can develop their skills and knowledge more holistically.

At key stage 5, you have developed the curriculum so that there is a wider range of subjects, including applied and vocational options. This means that current students are doing study programmes that match their aspirations and starting points well. However, non-qualification activity is not yet of a consistently high quality.

The tracking system for key stage 4 pupils is a particular strength. It allows you and your senior team a swift and accurate overview of how well pupils at key stage 4 are progressing. This means that interventions when pupils fall behind are well targeted and effective. You track groups of pupils meticulously so that patterns are spotted and issues dealt with quickly.

Tracking of key stage 5 students is less well developed and you have already put in place the plans to apply the rigour evident at key stage 4 to key stage 5.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that keeping pupils safe takes a high priority at your school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The policies, practice and systems are effective and the designated

safeguarding lead has a very thorough knowledge of all safeguarding practices because he keeps up to date and is qualified to train others in safeguarding. You ensure that you respond carefully to any incidents that do arise. For example, one incident was followed by additions to the curriculum so that pupils better knew the risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Staff training is supplemented by governor audits so that governors can be sure both that training has taken place and that the training has been effective. You have ensured that risks that pupils face are evaluated carefully; so, for example, while the whole staff has training on female genital mutilation, staff in the sixth form have enhanced training in this area.

The vast majority of staff and parents who completed the inspection questionnaire agreed that pupils are safe in school. Inspectors spoke to many pupils during the inspection and all said that they feel very safe in school. Through Parent View, a small number of parents raised concerns about bullying. Inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns. Pupils told us that bullying is extremely rare, is not tolerated by the school and, that when it does happen, teachers deal with it well. Pupils said that the school is a kind and caring place.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the factors affecting their safety, especially online, because you have ensured that these risks are discussed openly and in detail, both in lessons and assemblies.

Inspection findings

- Governors challenge school leaders effectively. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and understand what the school needs to do to improve. Governors are developing their skills well through skills audits and training, so that they can independently interpret school data. Consequently, governors are even more able to challenge school leaders and have a clear view of the school's progress.
- The school's caring ethos permeates all school activities and the relationships between teachers, pupils and parents. Pupils and parents told inspectors that staff are approachable and friendly. New pupils generally settle in quickly because of the well-constructed induction programme, and several parents commented that the school is responsive if issues arise.
- Outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 are very strong across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Last year on the Progress 8 measure, Year 11 pupils at Old Swinford Hospital gained around half a grade higher in each of their subjects than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Disadvantaged pupils made progress in line with national averages, and continue to do so. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points in line with national expectations.
- Pupils currently in the school are making similarly strong progress, especially the most able pupils. The school's own data shows that in all subjects, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make progress at least in

line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points. In English, history, geography, art, music and science, the most able are making progress above national averages.

- Leaders track all pupils' progress at key stage 4 forensically. They analyse different groups' progress to find patterns and identify those who fall behind. This includes the tracking of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders also closely track those who join the school in years other than Year 7 or 12 to ensure that they have settled well and are making good progress.
- Some pupils arrive in the school with no information about their prior attainment with which leaders can set targets. Leaders carefully assess these pupils' abilities to ensure that their targets are highly aspirational and this group makes strong progress.
- The school's co-curricular programme is a key strength and is valued highly by pupils and parents. The variety of activities on offer is extremely wide and pupils appreciate the ways in which these opportunities give them skills, confidence and a chance to excel in different areas.
- The school is calm and well disciplined. Even in busy social spaces pupils treat each other politely, respond promptly to teachers' requests and use their social areas respectfully.
- Pupils have a high level of awareness of the risks to them. They talked to inspectors authoritatively and in detail about the risks of phishing, cyber bullying, sexting and grooming, for example.
- While students in the sixth form make progress in line with students nationally with similar starting points, progress in the sixth form is not as strong as in the lower school. This is because, in the past, the curriculum has not met the needs of all pupils. Leaders' recent changes to the curriculum are expected to improve progress for post-16 students but these changes will take another year to become embedded. The school's tracking information suggests that current students in Year 13 will make similar progress to previous years, and current Year 12 will make better progress.
- The quality of non-qualification activity in the sixth form, especially that delivered in form time, is variable. Leaders are aware of this and already have plans to make sure that all tutorial time is well used and effective.
- Attendance is typically well above the national average for all groups of pupils in the school. Pupils enjoy being in school and this is reflected in these attendance figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress and attainment in the sixth form improves to match the high standards in the lower school

- tracking of students' progress in the sixth form matches the effectiveness of that in the main school
- the non-qualification activity in the sixth form, particularly that taught in form time, is of a consistently high standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Dan Owen
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leadership team and other members of staff with leadership responsibilities. With senior leaders we visited several classes during the day and spoke to pupils about their progress and work. We observed pupils at break and lunchtime and talked with them about their experiences of school. We met with the chair of governors and had a conversation with a representative of the local authority. We scrutinised documents, including the school's self-evaluation and action plan, safeguarding and child protection files and data about the progress of current pupils. We also considered 108 responses to Parent View and 43 responses from members of staff to the online questionnaire.

At our initial meeting we agreed on five focus areas for the inspection. These were:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, from their starting points
- the effectiveness of tracking systems in identifying weaknesses and triggering interventions
- the rate of absence and of persistent absence for pupils currently in the school
- post-16 progress, study programmes and the post-16 curriculum
- the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.