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Ms L Hiscock
Headteacher
Test Valley School
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Dear Ms Hiscock

Short inspection of Test Valley School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 2017 with Nicholas Simmonds, 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 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 have set high expectations and demonstrate a clear commitment to pupils. You are managing a difficult financial situation and meeting the challenges of providing a broad and balanced curriculum which meets pupils' needs. You have created a very cohesive staff team, whose members work well together. Middle leaders appreciate the support and opportunities that you provide for them. The members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed pride in the school and confidence in senior leaders. Parents are also very positive about the school and express confidence in your leadership.

Staff know pupils well and demonstrate a determination to provide pupils with the best opportunities to achieve well. Pupils recognise and appreciate the culture of care and support which is a feature of the school. Good relationships between staff and pupils are evident in lessons and around the school. Leaders monitor pupils' progress and welfare closely. Where concerns arise, pupils receive carefully targeted support to get them back on track.

You and other senior leaders are open and honest in your evaluation of the school. You know its strengths and weaknesses very well and are taking action to improve the less strong aspects. Most pupils achieve well at Test Valley and leave the school with examination results that are at least in line with, and in many cases above, the national average. As a result, in 2016 almost every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, achieved a place in either further education, employment or an

apprenticeship. However, you recognise that there are some groups of pupils who make less progress, including some disadvantaged and higher-attaining pupils. Leaders have taken actions to address the issues which led to this lack of progress and are confident that these groups will make better progress in 2017.

At the last inspection, the effective use of assessment information by teachers to provide work that meets the learning needs of all pupils was identified as an area for improvement. Your monitoring and action plans have focused on this aspect and have led to several such improvements. Teachers know their pupils' individual needs well. In the strongest lessons, teachers use this information effectively, to challenge pupils and ensure a deeper level of understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken very seriously by leaders and governors. All the necessary checks are undertaken in the recruitment of staff and records are diligently recorded on a single central register. Staff and governors receive regular updates. Policies and practice reflect the most up-to-date guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education'. Leaders and governors do not shy away from tackling difficult issues as there is a recognition that, even in the school's idyllic rural location, 'it could happen here'.

Pupils are taught effectively how to stay safe. In discussion with inspectors, pupils demonstrated a particularly strong awareness of how to stay safe online. Pupils also demonstrated an acceptance of differences and were unequivocal that they would not accept discriminatory language. Parents comment positively that their children are well cared for and safe at this school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors focused on the following lines of enquiry:
 - the actions leaders are taking to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils
 - the current attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - the level of challenge for most-able pupils
 - the level of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Leaders at all levels now track rigorously the progress different groups of pupils are making. They have rightly made increasing the progress of disadvantaged pupils a whole-school priority. In 2016, the attainment of the small group of disadvantaged pupils improved, diminishing the differences between their outcomes and national averages. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving a GCSE at grades A* to C in mathematics and English was above that of all pupils nationally. Although the progress of disadvantaged pupils was still

below the national average when compared to other pupils nationally, leaders' assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making better progress. They are now making almost the same rates of progress as other pupils in the school and are catching up with other pupils nationally, especially during key stage 3.

- Governors are knowledgeable and very supportive of the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously and provide challenge to the school's leaders. However, they are not yet sharply focused on challenging and holding leaders to account for the progress of key groups of pupils, particularly the most able.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average. You have rightly identified that some groups of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend school regularly enough, which affects their progress. Rigorous monitoring and individual mentoring by staff are leading to improvements in attendance, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs, whose attendance is now in line with other pupils.
- All pupils have aspirational targets. The new system of assessment introduced in key stage 3 promotes higher levels of challenge than previous systems. Leaders recognise that this new approach needs to become embedded in order to achieve the maximum impact on pupil progress. In many of the lessons visited, teachers were observed challenging pupils to work at even higher levels. For example, in English, teachers supported Year 11 pupils very well to meet the demands of the new examination syllabus. They did this by supporting pupils to develop their skills in analysing the meaning of unseen texts and writing extended, structured responses.
- The most able pupils' work showed that they are making increasingly good progress as a result of higher expectations and challenge in a number of subject areas, including science, humanities, English and modern foreign languages. You showed me assessment information which confirms this stronger progress for the most able pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a comprehensive tracking system in place for those pupils that require additional support. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were appreciative of the additional support that they receive. They say that it helps them to make good progress. Support plans are detailed and provide helpful guidance to teachers and learning support assistants. However, the use and impact of these support strategies across the curriculum is not yet closely monitored.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress accelerates further, particularly higher-attaining pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- senior leaders make better use of information about the progress of key groups

to measure the effectiveness of their actions

- work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance remains a top priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I talked to you and your deputy headteacher about your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, your plans for improvement and the progress of current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. I met with a group of middle leaders to discuss the leadership of teaching and learning. I met with governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The team inspector reviewed safeguarding procedures and records and met with the SENCo and the leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance. We both met with groups of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from all year groups. We visited lessons jointly with senior and middle leaders, visiting English, mathematics, science, history, geography, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. We reviewed a range of documents and information about pupils' progress. I also reviewed the findings of the most recent local authority monitoring visit report. We considered 104 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, text messages, 25 responses to the staff survey and 78 responses to the pupil survey. I also read two letters sent to me by parents.