

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 March 2017

Mr Tim Smith
Executive Headteacher
The Magna Carta School
Thorpe Road
Staines
Surrey
TW18 3HJ

Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of The Magna Carta School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017 with Victoria Kirby, 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 July 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 developed a strong safeguarding culture across the school which staff and pupils feel proud to be part of. You have established an effective leadership team by making significant changes so that leaders now have very clear roles and responsibilities. You routinely and accurately evaluate the school's successes and produce clear plans for moving forward. Consequently, staff understand the goals the school aims to achieve. Staff spoken with are hugely positive about the school. Pupils and staff feel respected and motivated to do their best. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, appreciate that you are approachable and that you know the pupils and parents well. Parents are happy with the school. One parent commented, 'The school, especially the headteacher, creates a very positive environment.' Most staff and pupils recognise that senior leaders provide effective role models, and your expectation of them to achieve the high standards set.

You have skilfully recruited and developed a team of hardworking and committed teachers. In addition, you have nurtured your experienced teachers to step into middle and senior leadership posts when vacancies arise. Teachers who are new to the profession feel very well supported. One such teacher described the school as 'an excellent place to start my career'.

Your leadership is shared with leaders in other schools and appreciated by the Unity Schools Trust and within the 2015 Learning Partnership. You have developed a strong relationship with local primary schools. This has contributed to the growth of your school in recent years.

Leaders are ensuring that pupils display mature attitudes to learning and, consequently, most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. You have created an environment in which equal opportunities are transparent so all pupils are encouraged to be independent and take on responsibilities. For example, pupils are proud of their 'ambassador' status and fulfil their roles admirably.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. You have developed a new structure for assessment and thorough monitoring of pupils' progress. Teachers now have clearer information to use when planning lessons to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, the majority of pupils who left in 2016 made good progress across a range of measures. You have used additional funding wisely to provide a range of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These approaches are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, the differences between these groups and other pupils, including those nationally, while steadily diminishing, continue to exist.

You have strengthened the team that focuses on improving pupils' attendance. Leaders and other staff have implemented a range of strategies that are having an impact on improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. Most pupils are responding well and attend school more frequently. You recognise that a further push is needed as attendance and persistent absence are not yet equal to the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have systems in place to check on the recruitment of staff and visitors. Staff with additional responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection are well trained and routinely share their knowledge with all staff. Consequently, staff spoken to know how to keep pupils safe and pupils told me that they feel safe in school. Leaders work closely with other providers to ensure the safeguarding of the few pupils who are learning elsewhere. You have created a strong culture of safeguarding that is appreciated by staff, pupils and parents.

Pupils feel that their personal, health and social education programme prepares them well to live safe adult lives. Pupils are aware of the risks associated with the misuse of drugs and alcohol, sexual relationships, inappropriate use of the internet, gun and knife crime. In addition, pupils know about a wide range of possible dangers including, for example, extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, as well as focusing on the quality of safeguarding and actions taken since the previous inspection, I pursued several lines of enquiry. These were the attendance of specific groups of pupils, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, and the impact of leadership in evaluating and amending the curriculum.
- You have created effective structures within the senior and middle leadership teams to successfully tackle areas needing improvement in the school. The assistant headteacher and pastoral leaders have implemented a wide range of strategies to increase attendance and reduce persistent absence of pupils who have not, over a long period of time, attended school regularly. Leaders and external agencies are working effectively with families whose children struggle to attend well. Leaders have been creative in their design of activities to re-engage pupils and develop their sense of belonging, including 'Bread Baking Weekend' and 'Bush Craft Survival'. Consequently, overall attendance has steadily improved year on year and vulnerable pupils are attending school more regularly. However, the levels of attendance and of persistent absence are not yet equal to the national average. Leaders have not yet fully exploited some of the strategies they are aware of that have proved to work in other schools.
- You have created an effective system to support pupils when they are struggling to meet the school's high expectations, whether it be for attendance or achieving high standards of work and/or behaviour. Pupils have the support of professional counsellors in addition to pastoral staff in the 'Well-being zone'. Pupils were keen to report the success of the activities they had participated in to improve their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils with this experience had gained the status of 'Well-being ambassadors' and proudly support other pupils, recommending the use of the 'My Teen Mind' app, created by pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care plan make good progress but some with additional needs, in the 2016 examinations, did not achieve as well as other pupils. You have appointed new staff and reorganised responsibilities to improve this situation. Overall, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in Years 8 and 9 are now making notably better progress than they were previously. Parents of some pupils feel, however, that leaders have been slow to address identified special needs and/or disabilities to enable their children to learn as well as others.
- Leaders are totally dedicated to and tenacious about improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. Pupils have participated in a wide range of activities designed to bring about improvements, and their success is closely monitored and tracked. For example, some disadvantaged pupils attended a breakfast club during which magazine articles were used as stimuli to improve writing. As a result of this range of approaches, pupils' confidence and engagement in lessons

have been enhanced and their progress has improved. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress in some subjects, such as mathematics, Spanish and geography, because of the effective support they receive. However, this is not yet consistent across the curriculum.

- Leaders continuously review and revise the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in each cohort and prepare them for post-16 education and training. Pupils say that they receive good-quality advice and guidance when choosing key stage 4 academic and vocational curriculum options and the opportunity to 'try before they commit' during Year 9. This helps to ensure that pupils follow courses they enjoy and do well in.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils' progress continues to accelerate
- successful strategies used to improve attendance overall are extended further to have even more impact on pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Roche
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited the school for one day. We met with you, your leadership team, staff and governors. The school's website, policies on safeguarding and child protection, your self-evaluation, the development plan and other documents were scrutinised. With leaders, we visited all year groups to see teaching, learning and assessment across a range of subjects. There were formal meetings with pupils as well as discussions with pupils around the school. We also looked at pupils' work over time while they were in lessons, in particular in science, geography, humanities, French and Spanish. The 197 parent responses to Parent View and their comments, the responses to the 92 staff questionnaires and their comments, and 198 responses to the pupil questionnaire were also analysed.