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Mr Dan Browning
Executive Principal
King Richard School
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Dear Mr Browning

No formal designation monitoring inspection of King Richard School

Following my visit to your school with Matthew Middlemore, Ofsted Inspector, on 21 and 22 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss the work of leaders in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned that leaders' actions to sustain excellent outcomes in English may not have been effective since the last inspection in 2013.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised leaders' plans for improvement, including department and whole-school planning. Meetings were held with senior leaders, heads of department and members of the school governance committee. A telephone conversation with a representative of Ministry of Defence (MOD) schools took place on 22 March 2017. A wide range of external and internal documents relating to the English curriculum, pupils' current performance and leaders' checks on teaching were considered. Inspectors also reviewed intervention plans and provision. Inspectors met with nine pupils from key stages 3 and 4. They also observed learning across 12 sessions, all jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke informally to a number of pupils in lessons to gather their views on the progress

they make. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, from different ability groups, both during learning sessions and separately with leaders, to evaluate their progress over time. Inspectors scrutinised the 63 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. A further 12 written comments were considered alongside 26 responses to the pupil survey. Information from the staff survey, completed by 36 members of staff, was also considered.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders' actions to sustain excellent outcomes in English have been effective.

The school continues to be outstanding.

Context

King Richard's is a smaller-than-average secondary school with sixth form. The school was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection in 2013. A new executive principal was appointed in September 2014. Other leaders have joined the school since the last inspection, including the heads of department for English and mathematics. There are currently 105 pupils on roll. A higher proportion of pupils arrive at or leave the school as a result of postings and relocation. The vast majority of pupils are White British, with a small proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in sustaining a culture of excellence

Ambitious leadership permeates the culture of the school. The executive principal leads a high performing senior leadership team who share responsibility and accountability for transforming pupils' experiences of learning. They are passionate about securing the highest possible standards of teaching and pastoral care. In all current endeavours, evidence clearly shows leaders' unwavering commitment to 'doing the absolute best for every pupil' through their robust and effective checks. Governors are equally ambitious and act as strong advocates for pupils and the military community which the school serves. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Highly capable and effective heads of department lead by example, promoting excellent teaching across a number of subject areas, including English. They design and source well-chosen professional learning opportunities to extend the skills of those they lead.

Pupils value and engage positively in opportunities that the school provides to help them excel both in their learning and as young people ready to move into the world of further education, training or employment. Those who spoke to inspectors said they felt very well supported and safe at the school. They acknowledge the care

that their teachers take to craft interesting and challenging learning experiences for them on a daily basis. They view the school as a haven, where their talents can be nurtured. Responses to the pupil, staff and parent surveys echo these views. Comments from parents such as 'staff and teachers are exceptional; their pastoral care is second to none' form the majority of opinion.

Leaders' checks are sharp and focused. Systems are well designed to improve learning. Leaders at all levels utilise a range of first-hand information about the impact of teaching and learning over time. Teachers receive regular and helpful feedback about their work and the difference their teaching makes to pupils' progress from a range of leaders within the school. These strong features also relate to the English department. There is strong evidence in minutes of departmental meetings, reports to governors and feedback from observed learning that leaders focus closely on pupils who begin their time at the school working beyond the expectations for their age. The most able pupils make rapid progress across a number of subjects, including English, as a result of reshaped provision and increased expectation for these pupils across all lessons.

Leaders' proactive investment in quality staff training underpins the excellent standards of teaching across the school. Personalised opportunities include coaching triads, research visits to high-performing schools in the United Kingdom, partnership working across schools in the federation and regular opportunities to access national leadership qualifications. Peer reflection and critique is used positively to build a culture of 'teachers as researchers'. Leaders across the school who spoke to inspectors said that the exceptional opportunities they are given to lead research enables them to develop excellence in teaching their subjects. The school's recent focus on questioning and the progress made by pupils who stay in the school for longer periods are already reaping rewards.

Recent changes to leadership in English have brought significant and rapid change. Pupils benefit from an exciting, innovative curriculum that engages and motivates them at every level. High-quality texts form the backbone of an excellent provision that challenges pupils to hone their critical response to texts. Pupils in Year 13, for example, drew effectively on a recent visit to a performance of 'Hamlet' in London when considering the character's testimony in the context of crime conventions. Expert questioning enabled pupils to draw perceptive comparisons across a range of texts. In Year 9, pupils were expertly prepared for debate in their study of 'The woman in black'. Pupils confidently offered opposing viewpoints, drawing accurately on text to support their opinions. In all English learning spaces, displays are vibrant and attractive and pupils use these interactively to support their learning. Regular dialogue between teachers and pupils supports strong improvements in pupils' critical commentary of text and in the quality of their choice of language when writing. Excellent standards of presentation are expected and, as a result, pupils take great pride in their work and complete it to a high standard.

Outcomes in English in 2016 were well above the national averages for progress

and attainment. The proportions of pupils securing rapid progress were also high. In the vast majority of written work sampled by inspectors, pupils were making rapid progress towards ambitious targets and continuing to achieve exceptionally well in English. In a few cases, where pupils join the school in key stage 3 with writing skills below those expected for their age, progress is less rapid. This is because teaching is not precisely focusing on the technical skills and accuracy that these pupils need to improve the quality of their written work at a brisk rate.

External support

Support from MOD schools has been effective in helping leaders to evaluate and review the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes over time. Advisory work has enhanced leaders' focus on groups such as the most able. Partnership working across the federation and between MOD schools has widened opportunities for staff development. This has contributed strongly to the highly effective training for teachers and helped leaders to maintain standards of excellence.

Next steps

- for pupils who join the school, further improve their technical accuracy when writing, by:
 - intervening at the earliest possible stage to remedy weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.

I am copying this letter to the director of education services for MOD schools and the chair of the school governance committee. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Wilkinson
Ofsted Inspector