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Mr Mark Griffin
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Dear Mr Griffin

Short inspection of Kingsmead Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Carol Hannaford, 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 and other leaders continue to show a determination to help all pupils to achieve as well as they can. All members of the school are encouraged to aspire to achieve high targets. It was clear to inspectors that relationships throughout the school are strong. Pupils and adults treat each other with care and respect and this encourages a positive learning environment.

Since the previous inspection, you and other leaders have focused on strengthening the quality of teaching. Through implementing a common approach throughout the school, you have successfully developed the skills that pupils need to be effective learners. Leaders' work has extended to working with the local primary schools so that pupils will benefit from a familiar approach as they move through the stages of their education. Inspectors saw evidence of this strategy throughout the school; for example, the displays on classroom walls usefully give pupils reminders about how to learn well. Your new assessment policy is ensuring that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve and inspectors could see that pupils act on this advice.

Shortly after the previous inspection you appointed three members of staff as 'leaders of achievement'. Their key role is monitoring pupils' progress, identifying any problems where pupils are falling behind, and then putting in place effective interventions to allow pupils to catch up. Some pupils told inspectors that they appreciated being helped to catch up, after periods of illness for example.

You have placed more emphasis on developing teachers' skills to improve the quality of teaching. More responsibility has been given to middle leaders to check the work of teachers in their subject areas. Senior leaders oversee the monitoring of all departments to ensure that there is appropriate support given when it is needed.

Teachers have been given opportunities to develop their skills by working collaboratively with teachers in other schools. Leaders are monitoring the impact carefully and have seen particular benefits in English and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy school. They are confident that they can talk to an adult at the school if they are worried about anything.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, and other leaders, have developed a strong culture of keeping pupils safe from harm. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and meet all statutory requirements. Comprehensive checks are made to ensure that employees, volunteers and any other visitors to the school are suitable to work with pupils. If any matter requires further action it is followed up swiftly by working with the appropriate authorities.

An appropriate level of training is given to all members of staff in a timely manner. Members of the governing body are also trained to a level that enables them to carry out their duties effectively. Pupils are well informed about the things that they can do to keep themselves safe. Inspectors talked to pupils to confirm that they do feel confident about keeping themselves safe from harm, for example when using the internet.

The school has effective systems to monitor the well-being and safety of all pupils, and works closely with other services to follow up any matters which need further investigation or actions. Leaders have worked diligently to comply with duties under the government's 'Prevent' agenda, and are working to raise the awareness of pupils in this respect.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry concerned the progress of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged. In 2016 the school's examination results showed that, overall, pupils made progress in line with the national average. However, there was a significant difference in the progress made by some disadvantaged pupils who performed less well than expected, especially in mathematics and humanities subjects. The school's records show that that leaders made considerable efforts to resolve these issues, but without success in cases where pupils' attendance rate was low.
- Governors use some of the specific funding allocated for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that all pupils have the equipment needed for school and can participate in a full range of activities. Teachers have received more training to ensure that they target their teaching to the needs of all pupils. Support is given to

disadvantaged pupils through interventions which are provided by allocated staff. When problems are identified specific help is given to pupils, for example with the development of reading skills. Governors acknowledge that although better progress is being made there is more that could be done to target support precisely where it is needed.

- Inspectors looked carefully at the progress of current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. The work of pupils of different ages shows that many are making good progress, in line with the progress expected of other pupils of their age. Disadvantaged pupils told inspectors that they are confident to ask for individual help and support. They say that the feedback given by teachers is particularly helpful to their progress in English, mathematics and languages.
- A second line of enquiry related to attendance rates. For a number of years the attendance rates of pupils have been below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although you and other leaders have worked hard to improve attendance, improvements have been very slow. Overall attendance rates for the current academic year are slightly better than last year, though still below the school's target.
- Attendance records show that pupils who live close to the school have attendance rates which compare well to the national average, including disadvantaged pupils. A very high proportion of pupils live some distance from the school in rural areas; they have long journeys to school. Analysis of the school's records show that the attendance of these pupils, as a group, falls below the national average.
- To improve the attendance of pupils, leaders are now using a number of strategies, including the close involvement of parent-family support advisers. Leaders plan to increase the number of advisers to make it possible for more pupils and their families to be helped. You are also taking measures to ensure that where pupils do miss lessons they can catch up quickly, so that the impact of absence is being reduced.
- My third line of enquiry concerned the progress of pupils, particularly in mathematics and humanities subjects. In 2016 GCSE results in mathematics were below those in English, and the results gained across the humanities subjects were below those in other subjects. Inspectors visited a range of humanities lessons with younger pupils, and found that pupils were focused on their learning and making good progress. In mathematics lessons older pupils were making good progress against ambitious targets. There is a positive learning environment with strong support from teachers encouraging pupils to thrive.
- My final line of enquiry was to assess whether the most able pupils are being helped to achieve the highest GCSE grades. Pupils are set ambitious targets and are well supported by their teachers, who encourage them by, for example, providing detailed advice about how they can take the next steps to improve.
- 'Challenge Plus' has been introduced to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils. This scheme is helping to raise awareness about opportunities open to them in the next stage of their lives, including the routes into university education.

- A small proportion of pupils told inspectors that they are occasionally distracted by poor behaviour, and for some bullying can be a problem at times. Inspectors observed very good behaviour in all the classrooms they visited, and around the school between lesson times.
- Inspectors looked at the school's records and saw evidence of the monitoring of events such as discriminatory behaviour, and that follow-up actions are taken. You have clear policies to deal with poor behaviours, and inspectors were satisfied that there is appropriate action taken when incidents are reported. The school's records also show that instances of poor behaviour have been dealt with resolutely. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has increased this year in response to specific issues.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further review the resources allocated to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make even better progress
- the attendance of pupils continues to improve, especially those who are disadvantaged or 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 Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Cox
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors observed learning in classrooms accompanied by members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors looked in detail at samples of pupils' work to assess progress over time, and talked to pupils about their learning. We observed pupils' behaviour around the school at movement and breaktimes. One inspector met with a group of disadvantaged pupils of various ages to talk in detail about their learning experiences. Meetings were held with senior leaders. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans, and safeguarding records. Inspectors looked closely at the school's records and analyses of information about pupils' progress, and also their attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also took into account 84 responses to Parent View, 59 responses to the pupils' survey and 35 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also received a letter, and points raised in it were considered alongside other evidence.