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26 April 2017

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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Kingdown School

Following my visit to the school on 30 March 2017 with Teresa Hill, 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.

Under your excellent leadership the school has retained all of its strengths and further developed and improved other aspects. You have dealt effectively with the improvement points in the previous inspection report. The school continues to improve and now has many excellent features. This is testament to the high quality of support you receive from other senior and middle leaders, such as heads of house and curriculum leaders, as well as the very well-informed academy council and the trust. You clearly have the confidence of staff, pupils and parents.

The school is a vibrant and happy place where pupils are cared for well and strive to do as well as they can. Pupils are a delight to meet and talk to; they are great ambassadors for the school. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is often exemplary. Most involve themselves fully in the life of the school and contribute to its highly inclusive and ambitious ethos and culture. Teachers are open, honest and totally committed to making the school even better.

Your evaluation of what is done well, and often extremely well, and those areas that are not yet at the very high level you expect is detailed, perceptive and accurate. You fully realise that while the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved to be good, it is not yet in line with that of many other pupils. The attendance of some of these pupils

also needs to improve further. You have put in place a number of effective actions to further improve the already good provision in the sixth form.

The very large majority of pupils currently in all year groups make very strong progress across a wide range of subjects because teaching, learning and assessment are consistently at least good, and often better. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is particularly strong but, while good and improving, lags a little in English. The curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of all pupils. The flexibility you use in setting pupils, for example in creating an all-boys group in English, is based on rigorous analysis and monitored closely. It works well.

Achievement in the sixth form is now consistently good and high in some subjects. More attention is being given to establishing and building on what students already know, understand and can do. This is raising achievement and reducing any variation in the outcomes for students with similar starting points in some subjects.

You and leaders at all levels track pupils' progress carefully using the school's well-considered and well-understood 'trajectory' model. Rigorous checks ensure that assessment information is reliable and accurate. This enables well-focused and effective individual support to be given to those pupils at risk of falling behind. Pupils undertake regular formal assessment tasks that help them know how well they are doing. They are mostly provided with good feedback on their classwork. Pupils respond well to this feedback, including when it is given orally, to make further progress. However, the feedback is not consistently at this high level. Occasionally, pupils are not clear about the progress they are making and how to improve their work.

The very large majority of pupils rarely miss a day of schooling. Overall attendance is above the national average and rising. As a result of the extensive range of strategies you and your colleagues use, the attendance of individual pupils who previously were persistently absent has improved markedly. However, despite this, some disadvantaged pupils and some of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are still too often not in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and records meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Staff training is comprehensive and effective; its impact is closely monitored.

Pupils are very well cared for. Ensuring that pupils are safe and well looked after is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils are well informed about all aspects of keeping themselves safe, including e-safety and online bullying, through the curriculum, assemblies that are often run by pupils, tutor time and other focused activities and events. Pupils value the vertical tutor groups, with pupils and students from Year 7 to Year 13, and the opportunities they create to support and look out for each other. Leaders keep detailed records which they check carefully to identify and act on the lessons to be learned from any incidents that occur.

Governors monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding carefully. Safeguarding and child protection are considered regularly at governing body meetings so that the effectiveness of the arrangements are scrutinised thoroughly. The governors responsible for safeguarding meet frequently with the headteacher in her role as school safeguarding lead and with the other staff with safeguarding responsibilities, including, very sensibly, the school nurse. Regular formal meetings are supported by frequent informal discussions. Governors are very well informed and fully involved in the analysis of all incidents and identifying and implementing the lessons learned. There are robust arrangements for dealing with any concerns raised by parents and these are rigorously followed.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that we would look at the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These are aspects of the school you had identified as needing some improvement, particularly their achievement in English.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils are currently making very strong progress in the top sets in English, mathematics and science – the subjects we looked at. They are making as much progress as other pupils with similar high starting points. Their progress is good, but not quite as strong, when they are in other teaching sets.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are mostly making good progress in English and a range of other subjects because they are taught and supported well. They make very strong progress in mathematics. Occasionally, the progress they make is not as strong as that of other pupils who are on the same trajectory.
- You have been successful in reducing the absence of many pupils with a history of very poor attendance. However, taken overall, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is still below average, although improving steadily.
- We also agreed to check that boys are making good progress in humanities subjects and languages. The quality of pupils' work supports the school's own assessment that the very large majority of boys are making at least the progress needed to meet their challenging targets.
- We also agreed to look at the sixth form. Almost all sixth form students complete their courses and achieve well. They are well advised about suitable courses before they join the sixth form or choose to follow a course elsewhere. The curriculum is matched well to the needs of a broad range of students, including provision at level 2, a mixed vocational and academic level 3 pathway, and A levels.
- An excellent scheme to develop each student's personal, social and employability skills has been introduced. This is helping to prepare students well for their next steps after leaving the sixth form.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain their relentless approach to making all aspects of the school as good as the best, particularly in further improving the attendance and raising the achievement of some disadvantaged pupils and some of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the directors of The Acorn Education Trust, the chair of the academy council, the regional schools commissioner, the Education Funding Agency and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Kingdown School is part of The Acorn Education Trust with three partner primary schools. It takes a lead role in the trust.

Discussions took place with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, the chair of the directors of the trust, the chair of the academy council, and other members of the trust and council. Inspectors also met with pupils in formal meetings, in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors also reviewed case studies of individual pupils. A range of documents was evaluated, including the school self-evaluation and the analysis of attendance, pupil progress and achievement, destinations and other information.

Inspectors visited classrooms, accompanied by senior leaders, in different year groups and across a range of subjects. They looked at pupils' work and talked with them about it. An assembly of pupils and students from Year 7 to 13, led by pupils from the school's 'equalities team', was observed.

Inspectors undertook a range of activities to check the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including checking documents and talking with pupils, teachers, school leaders and governors.

Inspectors took account of 245 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 243 with additional comments, 74 responses to the online pupil survey and the views of 83 staff who completed the online staff survey.