

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 July 2017

Miss Alison Davies
Headteacher
The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College
Newbold Road
Newbold-on-Avon
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV21 1EH

Dear Miss Alison Davies

Short inspection of The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2017 with Bernice Astling, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have encouraged an open, transparent and responsive leadership style. Senior leaders work very effectively as a cohesive and positive team. All leaders demonstrate a willingness to evaluate actions and learn lessons in order to continually improve provision and practice. Staff responses to Ofsted's online survey were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. A quote that typifies their responses is, 'The leadership team [is] open to new ideas and willing to listen to staff and adapt school systems.'

Middle leaders are skilled professionals who are fully accountable for the performance of their particular areas of responsibility, whether academic or pastoral. They are well supported by senior leaders. They have good opportunities to use their initiative and they value the fact that they have a direct line of communication to you.

Members of the governing body are well informed about the performance of the school. The extent of their engagement and involvement with the school has increased since you took up the post of headteacher. Minutes of governing body meetings indicate how effectively governors hold school leaders to account.

Leaders are very focused on raising pupils' aspirations and their cultural horizons. To this end, the broad and balanced curriculum has been carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils rather than to improve the school's position in national performance tables. It includes a good range of vocational and functional skills courses. Some off-site vocational provision is available, and some early entry is used where these approaches are judged to be in the best interests of pupils. Your aim is to fully engage pupils of all abilities in order to maximise their individual success.

There is a strong focus on the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their understanding of fundamental British values. The school's performing arts specialism remains an important aspect of the curriculum. School evidence suggests that this has a positive impact on pupils' confidence, their teamwork skills and their resilience.

Good provision is made to support pupils' future careers, including work experience opportunities for all Year 10 pupils. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Tailored careers advice and support are provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerable groups. As a result, all current Year 11 pupils are guaranteed suitable education or training places for September or are in the process of applying for a place.

You introduced a three-year key stage 4 curriculum this year. The rationale for this was to address more effectively the significantly below-average entry profile of pupils. It enables pupils to select subjects early and to begin to develop the skills and attributes that will enable them to achieve individual success in examinations and assessments at the end of Year 11. Year 9 pupils said that they are enjoying their key stage 4 studies.

Rigorous monitoring of the progress that pupils make, of their attitudes to learning and of their behaviour and attendance takes place. This is supplemented by a well-integrated academic and pastoral support and intervention process. As a result, all leaders, teachers and support staff know pupils very well and are alert to performance that falls below expectations, whether this is in relation to academic progress, attitudes to learning, attendance or behaviour.

Leaders are successfully addressing the areas for improvement in the last inspection report, which focused on improving the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding. A robust quality assurance framework is in place to ensure effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teaching is good and continues to improve. Observations during the joint learning walks undertaken by inspectors and senior leaders reflected the strengths and areas for development noted in the school's own monitoring evidence. The latter included challenge for the most able and the quality of teachers' questioning – both of which are good overall but could be, and are being, improved further. Strong partnerships with other schools contribute very well to the quality of professional development for teachers in this school.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are routinely attentive and

engaged because teachers make learning interesting and because pupils' behaviour and their personal development are at least good. Pupils said that they have very good relations with their teachers and feel that they are very well supported by them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils said that they feel safe and are confident that staff at the school will respond promptly and positively if they need help. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe and are prepared for potential risks they may face. This is the result of well-structured coverage of safeguarding-related issues across the curriculum.

Responses from parents indicate that they are confident that the school keeps their children safe. Staff are suitably trained in all relevant aspects of safeguarding and care for pupils, including, for example, in relation to the physical restraint of pupils. All policies are up to date and meet pupils' needs very well. Referrals about safeguarding are high, reflecting the high level of need of certain groups of pupils in the school, the concerns of staff for pupils' welfare and the effectiveness of staff training in recognising when a safeguarding issue is apparent. The school works very effectively with a wide range of external agencies to support pupils and maintains good communication with parents of pupils receiving support.

Inspection findings

- Currently, most pupils in all subjects and in all year groups are making at least average progress given their starting points. School data indicates that most, but not all, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making average progress given their starting points. This is not evident in national performance tables, which in 2016 included the outcomes for a very small number of pupils who have exceptionally challenging and very vulnerable circumstances. This meant their attendance and their achievement were severely affected, and in turn affected overall progress and attendance rates.
- A full programme of support, including academic, pastoral and financial elements, for disadvantaged pupils is in place. This is contributing significantly to ensuring that they are able to make similar rates of progress to those of other pupils. This is particularly apparent at key stage 3 where differences, across subjects and for all ability levels, are now either very small or no longer exist. However, the progress that disadvantaged pupils make is not yet equivalent to that made by other pupils nationally. High-ability disadvantaged pupils are provided with a good range of enrichment activities particularly focused on raising their aspirations. Attendance by some pupils at the University of Warwick Widening Participation residentials is an example of this.
- Leaders and staff work hard to improve the attendance of all pupils and of individual groups of pupils. They carefully track attendance and constantly review

strategies in this area to ensure that they are as effective as possible. The attendance of most pupils is high. However, the attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who face very challenging circumstances and intense individual needs is still too low for them to achieve well.

- The school is proactive in addressing the needs of vulnerable pupils who face very challenging circumstances. This was the case for a group of Year 11 pupils in 2016 and is particularly the case for a small but significant number of Year 7 pupils this year. These pupils have serious individual needs that had not been identified prior to their arrival, or they are not 'secondary ready'. The school supports such pupils exceptionally well, for example in securing, where appropriate, education, health and care plans, and in providing Forest School support.
- Following weak results in history and science in 2016, improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and to leadership in these areas. According to school records, these improvements are having a very positive impact. Pupils in all year groups are now making secure progress from their starting points in these subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to review and adapt strategies to promote the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that improvements evident in school records are sustained over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

On the day of the inspection, Year 10 pupils were out of school on work experience and Year 11 pupils had left school. Meetings took place with you, members of your senior leadership team, the chair of the governing body and groups of pupils from key stage 3. Inspectors examined the school's self-evaluation document and monitoring records concerning teaching and learning, achievement, attendance, exclusions and destinations. The single central record was checked, and relevant safeguarding procedures were reviewed. Learning walks to observe lessons in key

stage 3 were conducted with members of the senior leadership team. The nine responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and 86 responses to the staff survey were considered. The 60 responses to Parent View and responses to the school's own parent surveys were taken into account.