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Paul Reddick
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Dear Paul Reddick

Short inspection of Crispin School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2017 with Ofsted inspector Julie Nash, 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 May 2014.

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 leadership, the school continues to improve. You combine a clear-sighted focus on improving GCSE outcomes with a deep-seated moral commitment to serving the needs of all the young people in the area, especially the most vulnerable. Staff and pupils are quick to point to the impact you have made since you took up the post of headteacher in 2016. Both groups told inspectors that they value the fact that 'he does what he says he will do'. They know that you are determined to carry through on the promises you make and the policies that you put in place.

You and your senior team have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are making good progress in addressing areas that require attention. Your senior colleagues work together well as a team, and teachers value the support they receive from them.

Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They have wisely recruited members from education, public sector and business backgrounds to work alongside governors from the local community. They use their skills well to check on the work of the headteacher and senior leaders appropriately.

In the last inspection report, school leaders were asked to improve the achievement

of lower-ability pupils, to develop the role of middle leaders and to improve teaching and learning across the school by sharing their good practice and by raising the level of challenge for pupils. There has been a substantial improvement in the achievements of lower-ability pupils since the inspection. Since then, results have been at least in line with national averages and, in some cases, above. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making good progress.

Middle leaders are working effectively to drive up standards in their areas of responsibility. You and your senior colleagues hold them to account for their work appropriately and challenge them effectively. Middle leaders particularly value the reviews of departmental performance that you have led. You and your senior colleagues have created a culture in which middle leaders are keen to share ideas and learn from each other. The work of middle leaders has been a very significant factor in ensuring that pupils made better progress overall in 2016 than in most other schools in the country.

School leaders have ensured that teachers are given opportunities to work together on their classroom skills and so improve their work. This is improving the quality of teaching overall. However, you are aware that these opportunities have not yet had their full impact across all areas of the school. This is because there is not yet a rigorous approach to evaluating teaching and learning initiatives, which means that you do not know which actions need reinforcement.

Teachers set an appropriately high level of challenging work for most pupils. Pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. The great majority have good attitudes to learning. They are keen to answer teachers' questions and keen to succeed. However, when the level of challenge dips, so too does pupils' enthusiasm. When that happens, pupils lose concentration and can become disengaged.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior colleagues ensure that safeguarding has the highest priority in the school. Together, you have built a team of skilled and committed staff who work together to support pupils when they need help. Consequently, pupils are confident that they are looked after and they know who to go to should they have a concern.

You know that some pupils in the school community are particularly vulnerable and you have ensured that there is provision in place to meet their needs. For example, one member of staff focuses very effectively on supporting pupils who have mental health issues. Staff also work well with outside agencies, such as the local authority, and with parents to support pupils who need additional help to keep themselves safe. As a result, vulnerable pupils can continue to attend and achieve when they may have otherwise struggled to do so.

You have ensured that the school's safeguarding systems and checks on the recruitment of staff are in place and of a high standard. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities. Pupils receive regular reminders and updates about how to keep themselves safe in the real world and online.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on the behaviour of pupils, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and your work to ensure that all subjects perform as well as the best.

- The behaviour of pupils is good overall. The headteacher and senior team set clear expectations of pupils and, as a result, the vast majority of pupils behave well. In 2016, when the headteacher first arrived, the number of exclusions increased as he reinforced school rules. However, there has now been a significant fall as pupils become accustomed to the ground rules.
- Pupils are pleased that they can get on with their work with fewer interruptions. However, they reported that some poor behaviour remains. They are keen that the school leaders' raised expectations should be consistently applied through all classrooms so that they can concentrate on their work in every lesson. Senior leaders' work in addressing bullying is also having an impact, although they know that more remains to be done to eliminate bullying entirely.
- The atmosphere around the school site at break and lunchtime is calm and orderly. Pupils are good humoured and treat each other well. Relationships with teachers are positive and respectful.
- There are a small number of pupils who struggle to cope in a mainstream classroom environment. School leaders have put in place clear expectations for them and a range of support to help them. Some are supported in lessons, and others work with a local alternative provider, which can offer a curriculum that meets their needs. School leaders work very positively with the alternative provider to ensure that these pupils can overcome their difficulties and achieve some success.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve broadly comparable outcomes with those of other pupils in schools across the country. This is because they are set challenging targets and they are well taught. Teachers and pastoral staff understand the additional barriers that some disadvantaged pupils face and put extra support in place for them.
- Further improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a priority for governors and the headteacher. This is because while disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with others nationally they do less well than other pupils in the school. The headteacher has given a senior colleague specific responsibility to address this issue. In the short time since the appointment, staff reported that there has been an increasing impetus to raise standards further.
- GCSE performance is good across most major subjects. It is particularly strong in mathematics and languages, and is at least in line with other schools nationally in English, science and humanities. This is because expectations of what pupils can achieve are appropriately high and teachers are experts in their subjects.
- Senior leaders are keenly aware of subjects in which performance is weaker and of the reasons behind that. They are working successfully with middle leaders and teachers to implement strategies to bring about the developments required.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in behaviour across the school are further embedded and consistently applied in all areas of the school
- initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are rigorously evaluated.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, Ofsted inspector Julie Nash and I met with you, senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils. I had a telephone conversation with the head of The Mendip Partnership School, an alternative education provider. We visited lessons jointly with senior leaders to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, and the use of the pupil premium grant. We took into account 110 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 79 responses to the staff survey and 42 responses to the pupil survey.