

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 October 2017

Ms Jane Rutherford
Headteacher
King Edward VI School
Upper St John Street
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9EE

Dear Ms Rutherford

Short inspection of King Edward VI School

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 2017, with Clare Considine, 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 March 2014.

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 created a school culture which is underpinned by high expectations and a climate of mutual respect. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and work hard. Staff feel valued by leaders and they say that they are well supported by you and your leadership team.

The positive ethos and culture which you have created in the school is exemplified in the excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning of most pupils. Pupils try their best and show high levels of resilience and determination to succeed. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are respectful and many pupils regularly behave in an exemplary manner.

You have created a school ethos where every pupil is treated as an individual and you are succeeding in personalising learning for pupils, particularly pupils from vulnerable groups, including those who are disadvantaged.

You have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas which require further improvement. This is because leaders are continually evaluating the effectiveness of their work throughout the year so that they can maximise their impact on further improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. As a result, the school is continuously improving. For example, teachers are very well supported to

further improve their work through a well-focused approach to professional development. Teachers appreciate this support which further adds to the culture of reflection and continuous improvement.

Middle leaders, both academic and pastoral, are a skilled team of professionals. You have made sure that these staff are well trained through your professional development programme. You also ensure that the best practice in the school is systematically shared. As a result, pupils enjoy consistently strong teaching across subjects and year groups and middle leaders are fully empowered and accountable for leading their areas of responsibility.

Leaders keep the curriculum suitably under review so that any changes can be made to meet the specific needs of different groups of pupils. For example, you have made effective changes to the modern foreign languages curriculum because you are aware that outcomes for the most able pupils have not been strong enough in the past. These changes are having a strong impact on pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 3.

Your approach to personalising learning for pupils is evident in your senior team's leadership of the curriculum. The broad and balanced curriculum has been carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils rather than to improve the school's position in the national performance tables. For example, pupils benefit from good support and guidance when selecting their GCSE courses. This means that pupils do not always follow courses which are included in the school performance tables, including for some pupils who are disadvantaged. As a result, published data for disadvantaged pupils does not always provide an accurate picture of these pupils' achievements.

Robust strategies are in place for checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching at regular points throughout the year. This ensures that any pupils who may be falling behind are identified and appropriate support is implemented to help pupils catch up. This also supports your ongoing evaluation of the school's effectiveness because you quickly identify and improve any aspects of teaching which fall short of your appropriately high expectations.

Leaders are successfully addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. These related to improving the quality of homework, raising standards in modern foreign languages and narrowing the differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others. The significant improvements to the modern foreign languages curriculum are resulting in pupils who are currently in the school making good and improving progress in French, particularly. Homework is now typically well matched to the skills and abilities of different pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are catching up because of a highly personalised approach to raise their attainment and accelerate their progress.

Students in the sixth form make good progress in academic courses and achieve grades which enable them to progress to university, apprenticeships or employment. Outcomes in English language improved strongly this year. The very small number of students who study applied courses also typically make at least average progress. Sixth-form students told inspectors that teaching is improving in science. They also said that they feel very well supported for their future careers through an effective programme of impartial

careers advice and guidance.

The overwhelming majority of parents, pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires were very positive about the school. Most pupils said that they enjoy learning at the school and 85% would recommend the school to a friend. Similarly, 90% of parents said they would recommend the school to others. Almost every member of staff who responded said that they are proud to be members of the school community.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment procedures are sound. There is a strong culture of safeguarding which is effectively promoted by an appropriately vigilant and well-trained team of staff. Regular child protection and 'Prevent' duty training for staff throughout the year ensures that they have a strong understanding of safeguarding issues, including how to recognise any signs that a pupil may be at risk.

The governing body makes a good contribution to the safeguarding culture in the school. It holds leaders appropriately to account for the impact of the child protection policy and several governors are well-trained in safeguarding procedures.

Pupils feel safe at school because they say bullying is rare. School records confirm this. On the few occasions when incidents do occur pupils told inspectors that they are entirely confident that staff will quickly and effectively deal with matters.

Safety matters are taught effectively across the curriculum. As a result, pupils are very well equipped with the skills to recognise and assess risks, including the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and when working online.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a highly personalised programme of support which includes academic, pastoral and financial elements.
- Year 11 disadvantaged pupils who left the school last summer made good progress in mathematics. The progress that this group made in English, history and geography improved from the previous year. As a result, differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are diminishing, particularly in these key subjects. The school's assessment information for pupils who are currently at the school shows that disadvantaged pupils are catching up with others in many subjects and most year groups. This was confirmed from inspectors' visits to lessons during the inspection. However, you are aware that the improvements need to be more rapid because the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils does not yet match that of others nationally.
- Most pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy all that the school has to offer. Overall attendance has been above average for the past few years. However, the attendance of a relatively small group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or

an education, health and care plan has been too low in recent years. You are improving the attendance of this group this year because of improved systems for monitoring these pupils' attendance and the high-quality personalised support which your attendance team gives to pupils and families. However, the improvements are not yet sufficiently rapid.

- Although published data shows that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was too low last year, this data does not take account of a very small number of pupils who were unable to attend school regularly through no fault of their own. When taking this into account, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils last year was similar to all pupils nationally. However, although there are improvements, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who regularly miss school is too high.
- The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. It is well informed and holds you and other leaders appropriately to account for your plans and actions. It makes a good contribution to the culture of continuous improvement. However, it has not held the school as robustly to account for improving the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and disadvantaged pupils as rigorously as it has on all other matters. This is an important reason why improvements in the attendance of these groups are not as rapid as they could be.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils are improving. For example, in 2017 a higher proportion of the most able Year 11 pupils attained the highest grades compared to 2016, in all science courses, modern foreign languages, geography, history and physical education. The school's assessment information shows that the most able pupils are increasingly reaching their potential in most subjects and year groups.
- Outcomes in modern foreign languages have not been good enough for the most able Year 11 pupils in recent years. The main reason why this has been the case is because pupils have not had sufficient time to study modern foreign languages in sufficient depth. However, this is improving strongly for pupils who are currently in the school, particularly in the lower year groups, because of the effective changes which you have made to the curriculum to provide more time for languages. As a result, most pupils are making good progress, particularly in French. However, although improving, the rate of improvement is not as rapid in German. Also, pupils who are currently in Year 11 have not benefited fully from the curriculum changes and some of the most able pupils are not yet on track to reach the high grades that they are capable of achieving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- further improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils by reducing the number of pupils who regularly miss school
- improve teaching and learning in German, particularly for the most able pupils, by making sure that pupils are able to study the subject in greater depth

- make sure that the governing body robustly holds the school to account for accelerating improvements in the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and those disadvantaged pupils who regularly miss school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Sutton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and members of your senior leadership team, the head of modern foreign languages, staff responsible for safeguarding, those responsible for leading attendance, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, a group of teaching and non-teaching staff and a group of pupils from all year groups. Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at several documents, including records relating to attendance, bullying, safeguarding, information about pupils' progress, the school development plan and the school's self evaluation document. Inspectors conducted joint learning walks to lessons with senior leaders. The 156 responses to Parent View were considered as were the 101 pupil responses to Ofsted's questionnaire. Eighty-eight staff responses to the questionnaire were also taken into account.