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Mr Christopher Keating
Headteacher
Davison Church of England High School for Girls, Worthing
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Dear Mr Keating

Short inspection of Davison Church of England High School for Girls, Worthing

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017 with Debbie Godfrey-Phaure and Anne Cullum, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has continued to build upon the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your principled and aspirational leadership embeds a culture of strong pastoral care and high academic standards. Davison is a harmonious school where everyone pulls together to do their best. Morale among pupils and teachers is high at your inclusive school. Pupils we spoke to described the school as like a 'big family'. Your staff share your vision and work very hard to maintain the school's many strengths and to improve it further. There is a caring and stimulating ethos, which enables pupils to typically make strong progress and achieve well. Parents speak very highly of the school. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

You are supported well by your senior leadership team and your middle leaders. Together, they are increasingly effective in ensuring that standards of teaching consistently reflect your high expectations. You, your leadership team and governors understand clearly the key priorities for further improvement. Governors know the school very well and provide strong challenge and support to you and other leaders. Your comprehensive school improvement plan involves all leaders in planning for improvement. Your timely actions to address weaknesses have had a positive impact. For example, you have ensured that the curriculum better prepares pupils for the demands of the new GCSEs by ensuring that plans provide opportunities for pupils to experience higher levels of challenge. Pupils also have the chance to study subjects in

greater depth.

The atmosphere in your school is one of calm purpose and enjoyment of learning. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are kind and respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of the environment. They appreciate the wide range of clubs and other activities on offer. This includes a large variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical, artistic and dramatic talents.

Since the last inspection, you have strengthened the quality of teaching in the school. This has resulted in accelerating progress for pupils in all years and pupils achieving better GCSE examination results by the end of Year 11. In 2017, pupils' progress across the curriculum was above the national average. Outcomes were convincingly above average in several curriculum areas, such as English, chemistry, religious studies, art and dance. Disadvantaged pupils now make progress that is in line with that of other pupils nationally and, in English, is even more rapid. You and your senior leaders are fully aware that pupils do not attain as well by the end of Year 11 in a small number of subjects as they do in others, and you are tackling the underlying causes of this. You are also aware that pupils in key stage 3 are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons and have identified strategies to address this.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. All staff and governors receive helpful training that ensures they know how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

A dedicated and highly skilled team of staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside pupils, parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff closely monitor pupils causing concern; each pupil is given a key worker and a well-structured programme ensures that no child falls through the net. Case studies discussed with inspectors showed evidence of regular and thorough liaison with external providers to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being. They are particularly appreciative of the efforts staff make to ensure the safety of the large number of pupils who travel to school by train. Parents say their children feel safe and are well cared for in school.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for managing their own safety. A comprehensive and well-structured programme of activities delivered through lessons, tutor time and assemblies supports pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. The pupils that inspectors spoke to had a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. The school has been particularly pro-active in supporting mental health. Nine staff have recently been trained on mental health issues and are beginning to provide valuable support for some pupils.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry inspectors looked at was the impact leaders have had on improving the quality of teaching, to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently strong across the curriculum. This was the main area for improvement from the school's previous inspection in April 2014. During the inspection, inspectors verified leaders' assertions that the quality of teaching across the school is effective and improving. In lessons, teachers have high expectations and plan tasks that encourage pupils to participate well. Most teachers use questioning increasingly well to challenge pupils and probe their understanding. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are overwhelmingly positive and pupils are eager to do well.
- Leaders are now monitoring the quality of teaching more effectively because they focus more on the impact it has on pupils' progress. An established programme of systematic monitoring activities provide leaders with a clear view of strengths and priority areas for improvement.
- Visits to lessons and discussions with staff and pupils verified that, while the new assessment system has great potential, it is still in an early stage of development and there is some variability in its impact. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that teachers make better use of assessment to ensure that all pupils are provided with greater levels of challenge, particularly in key stage 3.
- Inspectors also focused on how successfully leaders are improving the poor attendance of particular groups, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The attendance of girls who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved slightly. Case studies show marked improvements in the attendance of some individual pupils. However, absence rates remain persistently high for disadvantaged pupils and increased slightly this year. Because of the inclusive ethos of the school, a number of disadvantaged pupils with poor prior attendance are admitted each year, which increases overall absence rates. Consequently, leaders have prioritised improving attendance through a restructuring of leadership responsibilities to retain a focus on work in this area.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as their peers in their GCSE examinations in the past. Leaders have prioritised increasing the progress of this group and they rigorously monitor progress of this group of pupils. Additional pupil premium funding is now targeted carefully and extra help is making a positive difference to pupils' progress. In 2017, the progress of disadvantaged pupils improved so that it was in line with that of other pupils nationally. In lessons, inspectors observed disadvantaged pupils making good progress and having positive attitudes to their learning. A 'pupil premium champion' has recently been appointed but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this development.
- Outcomes in English are well above the national average and this subject is one of the highest performing in the school. In English, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than their non-disadvantaged peers. Therefore, inspectors considered the reasons why outcomes have been so strong and how successfully good practice is being spread to other subjects. They saw evidence of very effective teaching in English lessons, characterised by high expectations, teachers' strong subject knowledge, a systematic approach to planning and assessment, and appropriate

levels of challenge.

- Leaders provide opportunities for teachers to work together to share what works best in lessons. Staff work in small groups, trialling new strategies to enable them to fully reflect on and improve their practice. Inspectors observed evidence that supports leaders' assertions about the high standards of teaching in other subject areas, notably religious studies and citizenship.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently make better use of assessment information, particularly at key stage 3, so that pupils are given more challenging tasks that accelerate their progress over time and raise their attainment further
- recent focused work to improve attendance leads to disadvantaged pupils coming to school more regularly than in the past.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other leaders, governors and other staff. They spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally. They visited 24 classes to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They considered documentary evidence, including that related to safeguarding, attendance, progress of current pupils, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the work of governors. The team took account of 167 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the outcomes of a staff survey (71 responses) and pupil survey (310 responses).