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Ms Sarah Lowkis
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Lowkis

Short inspection of Lavington School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 2017 with Gary Lewis, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your promotion to headteacher in January 2015, you have adeptly developed the skills of senior staff, and so built a highly motivated and effective senior leadership team. You bring out the best in your staff because you have high expectations of them, and you provide opportunities for them to extend their skills. You have successfully encouraged collaborative work within school and with a local network of schools. Teachers reflect on their practice and are receptive to new ideas. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving.

The governing body is well organised and provides a good level of challenge and support to you and your senior leaders. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2017. Although a number of governors have moved on since the previous inspection, good succession planning has ensured that the governing body retains the necessary skills to fulfil its duties well.

You are passionate about pupils' personal development. You encourage them to take on leadership responsibilities, and, as a result, pupils are self-assured and self-confident. For example, recently, pupils played a leading role in setting up a very successful cadet unit at the school. Pupils' academic progress was above average in 2016 and continued to be strong in 2017. Consequently, pupils' attainment,

measured across eight GCSE subjects, was well above the national average in 2016 and 2017. Pupils make particularly rapid progress in GCSE mathematics. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular cultural and sports clubs. They travel to school from a wide area. By providing activities from early morning until early evening, the school plays an important role in the local community.

At the previous inspection you were asked to improve pupils' progress in English and to ensure that homework is used more consistently. Following a change of leadership in English, the quality of teaching has improved and, as a result, current pupils are making better progress. You have successfully introduced a new system for setting and recording homework. Many parents use this regularly to see what their children are learning.

Disadvantaged pupils' progress has, in the past, not been as strong as that of other pupils nationally. Your senior leaders have taken concerted action to improve support for this group of pupils, and have raised their achievement. Although you set high expectations for pupils' conduct, the proportion of pupils excluded for poor behaviour was above average last year. You have credible plans to improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils who have had difficulty in the past. You recognise that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not make strong progress from their starting points last year. However, inspectors' observations and pupils' work indicate that this group of pupils are now receiving effective support. In recent years, there have been wide differences between the progress of boys and girls in some subjects. Your action to improve teaching has ensured that these differences have been reduced.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your designated safeguarding leader is well trained and suitably experienced. All the proper checks are made on staff to make sure they are suitable to work with children. Training logs indicate that, once appointed, staff keep their skills up to date.

Your records show that, when concerned about the welfare of a pupil, you make referrals to other agencies quickly and follow these up unrelentingly if you have further concerns.

You have ensured that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. As a result, pupils understand the steps they need to take to avoid these risks. Pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed they are well cared for and feel safe. Most expressed confidence that staff will deal with any cases of bullying effectively. A small number of pupils, and some parents, expressed concern that incidents of bullying were not dealt with quickly enough. However, the large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that their child is happy at school and is kept safe. A high proportion of parents would recommend this school to others.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders, working closely with the governing body, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They test new initiatives through research, and so identify those which are most effective. As a result, their plans for improvement are precise and realistic.
- The first line of enquiry, to decide if the school remained good, focused on disadvantaged pupils' progress. In 2015 and 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was well below the progress of other pupils nationally. As a result, the attainment of these pupils in GCSE English and mathematics was well below that of other pupils in school. Senior leaders now have better systems for identifying the different needs of pupils, some of whom fall into several categories of concern. Middle leaders check that academic targets for disadvantaged pupils are set at a suitably high level and communication among teachers about pupils' needs has improved. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved considerably. In 2017, their progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was higher than that of other pupils nationally and other pupils in the school.
- Another line of enquiry looked at the extent to which pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are challenged. This group of pupils is supported well by teachers. Teaching in English, mathematics and across other subjects provides suitable challenge and support for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants provide skilful help for these pupils. For example, a pilot project has successfully promoted Year 9 pupils' literacy skills. However, there is scope for this initiative to be used with other year groups.
- A third key line of enquiry evaluated aspects of pupils' behaviour. The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils and found them to be polite, self-assured and well mannered. However, the proportion of pupils who were excluded from school because of incidents of poor conduct rose last year and was above the national average. Many of these exclusions involved the same pupils. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the particular issues involved in these exclusions and work constructively with both the pupils and their parents. Pastoral support workers help many pupils overcome barriers to good behaviour, but their work has not yet brought a reduction in exclusion figures.
- A final line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure that boys' and girls' progress is more evenly balanced. In 2016 and 2017, boys' progress in GCSE mathematics was better than girls' and the reverse was true in GCSE English. Senior and middle leaders considered the reasons for this and, for each subject, changed the assessment process where it was leading to an imbalance. Inspectors found that boys and girls take part enthusiastically in lessons and have equal opportunities to succeed. Work in books, and discussions with pupils, indicate that pupils' progress is now more evenly balanced. Senior leaders acknowledge that further sharing of the skills developed by these teachers would benefit staff in other subject areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tutors are involved more consistently in monitoring and promoting disadvantaged pupils' academic progress
- recent pilot work with Year 9 pupils, to develop their literacy skills, is extended to other year groups
- pastoral support workers further develop their role in helping pupils who find it difficult to moderate their behaviour
- teachers are given more opportunities to share good practice about how to support different groups of pupils, for example boys and girls.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, the chair of the governing body and two other governors and with senior leaders. We observed pupils in lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. We met with pupils from the school council and spoke with other pupils during lessons. We scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's development plan, the school's own evaluation of its performance, minutes of governors' meetings and records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. We took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires from 33 pupils, 33 members of staff and 127 parents.