

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Louise Ceska
Newlands Girls' School
Farm Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 5JB

Dear Mrs Ceska

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018 with Ross Macdonald and Peter Rodin, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You provide strong and determined leadership to ensure high-quality education for every pupil regardless of her ability or circumstance. Within the caring and stimulating ethos in the school, pupils achieve very well. Staff at the school trust and respect you and the leadership team. Morale is high and everyone at the school shares your determination to provide the best for every pupil. However, you and your leadership team are not complacent and constantly seek ways to help pupils to make even greater progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind and respectful towards each other and teachers. They wear their uniform with pride and take good care of their school environment. In lessons we saw pupils work very hard and keep going when tasks were difficult. Pupils' work is very well presented and is of a consistently high standard. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and appreciate the wide range of clubs and activities on offer. This is reflected in their overall good attendance. Leaders' ongoing work to improve the attendance of the very small group of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough is well judged.

Leaders track pupils' progress meticulously and regularly, which allows teachers to provide prompt and effective help for any pupils who are at risk of falling behind.

For example, when pupils' progress causes concern they are given relevant extra support to help them catch up. As a result of this focused support, pupils' progress is very strong in all years in the main school, including for disadvantaged pupils. A group of pupils said, 'The best thing about this school is the teachers, they will always help with your work and help you solve your problems.'

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and how well it contributes to strong progress. Leaders therefore know that, in Years 7 to 11, pupils' progress is very strong in English, mathematics, science, the humanities subjects and modern foreign languages. You also know the very few subjects where progress is not quite as good as the best.

At the last inspection senior leaders were asked to improve some aspects of teaching. Since then, they have developed effective approaches for training which develops teachers' skills well. This helps teachers to plan effectively for different groups of pupils' varying abilities. As a result, all pupils in Years 7 to 11 now make very strong progress in nearly all subjects.

Governors provide strong challenge and support to you and other leaders. They have a very good understanding of the school's many strengths and areas where further improvement is possible. For example they recognise that lower-attaining pupils and students in the sixth form could make even better progress. Governors take a professional and reflective approach to their roles, for example regularly attending relevant and up-to-date training. They are ambitious for the school and actively liaise with the local community to find ways to help it.

Parents and pupils speak highly of the school and most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. One observed that, 'This is a great school because the girls are very happy and great teachers care for every girl.'

Safeguarding is effective

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of a high quality. Before appointing staff, leaders carry out all the required employment checks. These are then recorded meticulously on the school's single central register. All staff and governors receive regular training on how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. There is a strong culture of vigilance and support to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

A team of dedicated staff works with sensitivity and determination alongside parents and carers and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents say that their children feel safe in school. Pupils state that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have any worries. Pupils told us they value the regular reminders through lessons and assemblies about how to keep themselves, friends and family safe.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I and my colleagues focused on the following lines of enquiry: the extent to which disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving; how effectively leaders and managers are increasing pupils' progress where it could be even stronger; and how successfully leaders are improving students' progress in the sixth form.
- Leaders have developed effective ways to encourage disadvantaged pupils to attend more regularly. However, a very small group of pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable do not attend regularly. Leaders are determined to improve this group of pupils' attendance by monitoring them closely and intervening promptly when their attendance drops or their progress slows.
- Lower-attaining pupils are given extra support, particularly to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Planned by leaders, they each have a bespoke key stage 4. Leaders' current assessment information and the work inspectors saw in books and lessons show that these pupils now make rapid progress. The school is rightly continuing to focus on accelerating their progress until it matches the extremely strong progress made by their peers.
- In the main school progress is very secure and improving in most subjects. Progress in food technology, business studies and creative subjects is well above average based on pupils' starting points but it is not quite as strong as in other subjects. Leaders are not complacent and they are working to accelerate pupils' progress in these subjects to match that made in all other subjects.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view the strengths and weaknesses of students' progress in Years 12 and 13. The sixth form provides a caring and supportive environment where students feel safe and enjoy learning. Currently these students make strong progress, particularly in applied subjects. However, leaders are now, correctly, focusing on supporting teachers to improve students' progress even further so that it matches the impressive progress made by pupils in the main school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of progress for lower-attaining pupils and for students in the sixth form continue to accelerate
- the small group of particularly vulnerable pupils are supported to further improve their attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Turner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, leaders, governors and staff and spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited lessons to observe learning accompanied by senior leaders and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I and my colleagues observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they left school. We considered documents about safeguarding, attendance, current pupils' progress and governors' work. The outcomes of a pupil questionnaire, staff survey and 125 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were taken into account.