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Mrs Emma Bryson
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Mansergh Kaserne
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Dear Mrs Bryson

Short inspection of King's School

Following my visit to the school on 6 and 7 February 2018, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

King's School is a small secondary school which caters for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years. It serves the military communities of Gütersloh, Paderborn and Bielefeld. Almost all pupils are from military families, with the remainder from civilian families or from German families in the locality. A very small number of students have special educational needs. Following planned changes to military deployment in the area, the school is due to close in the summer of 2019.

Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2017, you have worked hard to build on the strengths of the school. You have not shied away from important improvements to teaching and leadership. For example, you have rightly made changes to strengthen the accountability of staff for pupils' well-being and achievement. Despite the planned closure of the school, you are determined to provide the best you can for every pupil. Pupils who spoke to me said that they enjoy their lessons and get on well with staff and other pupils. This is a welcoming and friendly community, where pupils behave well and are proud to be a part of the school.

At the previous inspection of the school, leaders were asked to improve the achievement of the most able pupils. You have tackled this by increasing the level of challenge across the curriculum for all pupils, including those in key stage 3. In

particular, you have ensured an emphasis on the quality of pupils' writing. Many pupils write confidently at length and can express their ideas clearly and accurately. The most able pupils in key stages 4 and 5 in particular show good skills in evaluation and analysis. In the examinations in 2017, the progress of the most able pupils at the end of key stage 4 rose markedly. Feedback received from examining bodies particularly pinpointed the quality of pupils' extended writing.

Another area for improvement from the previous inspection was to do with students in the sixth form who needed to resit GCSE English or mathematics. Actions to tackle this aspect have been effective. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who gained a pass grade or higher in their resit courses was well above that typically seen in other secondary schools.

Lastly, the school was asked to improve the impact of the school governance committee. Again, good progress has been made. The governance committee now meets during the school day so they can see the work of the school at first hand. They have a greatly improved understanding of performance information and of the school's priorities for development. Governors are also playing an important role in supporting school leaders in the period leading up to the closure of the school.

During this short inspection, in addition to considering the priorities for improvement from the previous inspection, we agreed to focus on a small number of other areas. Firstly, we looked at how well leaders are improving pupils' achievement throughout the school and providing suitable programmes for students studying in the sixth form. Secondly, we agreed to consider how effectively the school is tackling changes to assessment and the curriculum in key stage 3. Lastly, we considered the contribution and impact of leadership, particularly subject leadership, to improving the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding systems and procedures are effective. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and receive regular and up-to-date training. Older students who have responsibility for mentoring younger pupils also receive suitable guidance to support them in this role. Arrangements for managing referrals are well organised and detailed records are kept of actions taken and any involvement with external agencies. The recently formed school governance committee for safeguarding is helping to provide useful scrutiny and challenge.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school, although a very small number of pupils, particularly girls, worry that their concerns may not be taken seriously by all staff. However, arrangements to prevent bullying and other unkind behaviour are well organised and effective. Public spaces and social times are calm and pupils manage themselves well. Through the curriculum and in tutorial sessions, pupils are helped to understand risk and learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Attendance is above average. Any instances of persistent absence which may indicate a safeguarding concern are followed up promptly by staff.

Inspection findings

- Overall, all groups of pupils achieved well in their GCSE examinations in 2017. Across a wide range of subjects, rates of progress rose in comparison with the previous year. Improvement was particularly strong in English and pupils also made good progress in mathematics. Pupils learn well in dance, food technology, history, religious education and in modern foreign languages. Your focus on good-quality teaching, on a challenging curriculum and on developing pupils' examination skills have all contributed to this improvement. Across the school, you have successfully established higher expectations of pupils' work, particularly boys.
- However, achievement is not as strong as this in science. Although leadership of this subject has been strengthened, you rightly recognise that further improvements are needed to the overall quality of teaching in this subject. Nevertheless, there are signs of improvement. Pupils say that their lessons are now more challenging and that they are improving their understanding and knowledge of scientific ideas and principles.
- In the sixth form, overall attainment is broadly in line with national figures. A wide range of courses is available. These are well matched to students' needs and aspirations. Achievement on vocational courses is particularly strong, and is typically better than for students following academic programmes. Although there is a strong emphasis on students' pastoral and welfare needs, the focus on the quality of provision in the sixth form is less prominent.
- The sixth-form enrichment and non-qualification programme has some weaker aspects. While there are a number of different opportunities and experiences available for students, there is not a fully coherent and high-quality programme on offer throughout years 12 and 13, including, where possible, meaningful work experience. This means that the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are not fully met. For example, students say that they do not have enough authentic opportunities to develop skills for work, life and study.
- Since your appointment, you have ensured a significant emphasis on improving the curriculum and assessment at key stage 3. Admirably, you have taken a fundamental and principled approach to these changes, and have not simply sought a 'quick fix' or short-term solution. This reflects your ambitious vision for the school, despite its planned closure in 2019. Through ongoing professional development, you have ensured that staff understand the language and terminology of assessment, and this is providing a good foundation for future developments.
- In many subjects, feedback to pupils about their work is effective in helping them to develop and deepen their learning. For example, in food technology, pupils work confidently and independently to produce outcomes of a very good standard. The innovative use of tablet technology in this subject helps pupils to overcome for themselves any difficulties as they arise.
- Improvements to the curriculum in key stage 3 are already enabling pupils to make better progress. In most subjects, teaching now provides greater challenge and depth of learning. However, although a good start has been made to

improve assessment, as you rightly recognise, further work is needed to ensure a closer link between assessment and the curriculum, so that assessment is more effective in supporting pupils' learning.

- You have rightly raised your expectations of the contribution of leaders at all levels to improving the school. As with members of your senior team, subject leaders are being given greater responsibility and are held accountable for improvement in their subject areas. This is helping to improve teaching and raise achievement. Subject leaders are developing their skills well and are benefiting from the support and challenge of line managers and senior leaders.
- Subject leaders are well on the way to developing more effective programmes of learning and assessment. Those leaders who spoke with me had a very clear idea of what they want to achieve. Improvements to the curriculum in English, in food technology, music and modern foreign languages in particular are helping to raise pupils' achievement. Leaders rightly recognise the need to continue to share practice and to make links and collaborate with other secondary schools.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement. Although staff keep a close eye on students' progress and welfare, they do not pay as much attention to checks on curriculum and teaching quality. For example, staff do not make sure that all students have the skills for life, work and study that they need for the sixth form and beyond.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- continue to develop assessment and the curriculum in key stage 3
- improve leadership in the sixth form, including the impact of non-qualification activity on students' skills for life, study and work in order to fully meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes
- further develop the skills and confidence of subject leaders, including through the support and challenge of senior staff.

I am copying this letter to the director of education services for MOD schools and the chair of the school governance committee. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and with other senior leaders, and also met with leaders of various subject areas. I also met with staff at the school and spoke both formally and informally with pupils and students at times throughout the inspection. I held two focus group meetings with groups of pupils and students to discuss their learning in different subjects. I looked at a wide range of school documentation, including school improvement planning and self-evaluation, subject area curriculum plans and assessment information and at records of leaders' monitoring activities. I scrutinised safeguarding records and considered evidence of how staff and leaders work to ensure pupils' safety, well-being and welfare. Together, we visited classes where we also looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke with them about their learning. I met with three members of the school governance committee and scrutinised minutes available on the school website. I considered the 48 responses submitted to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and at 17 responses received from members of staff to an online survey. In addition, 104 responses from pupils to an online questionnaire were also taken into account.