

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 February 2018

Russell Kyle Jonathan
Headteacher
Swanmore College
New Road
Swanmore
Southampton
Hampshire
SO32 2RB

Dear Mr Jonathan

Short inspection of Swanmore College

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Anne Cullum and Peter Fry, 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 Swanmore College was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have restructured the senior leadership team. All senior leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious for the school and are fully aware of their responsibilities. You are keen to develop a more distributive leadership approach and have placed greater emphasis on the accountability of middle leaders. The skilled governing body has a good knowledge of the school and is effective in challenging and supporting you. It ensures that the high standards achieved within the school continue to improve. Since the last inspection you have been integral in establishing the Rural Schools Alliance, a partnership between five schools in Hampshire that aims to provide high-quality teacher training. This has enabled you to train and develop teachers and leaders for Swanmore College.

You and your senior leadership team have been determined that GCSE results continued to improve since the last inspection. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving a grade 4 or 5 and above in English and mathematics was significantly above the national average. Results in mathematics were particularly impressive. You have recently reviewed the curriculum across the school and are currently implementing some changes. You believe that the new curriculum model will be more appropriate for the pupils and will ensure that they are even better prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. It is too early in the development of this curriculum model for you or inspectors to evaluate the impact of it.

At the last inspection, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was identified as an area for improvement. You rightly acknowledge that there is still work to be done before disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers. Senior and middle leaders have developed a more effective system to identify any pupils that are underperforming. Appropriate interventions are put in place to support these pupils. The impact of the interventions is evaluated to ensure that pupils achieve well.

For some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and boys, you have identified that their literacy skills and ability to write well and at length are a barrier to their learning in some subjects. While many teachers and pupils are rising to this challenge, not enough are yet to make a considerable difference.

Pupils' comments about the school are very positive. They feel happy and safe within the school. Year 7 pupils told us that the school is 'supportive, caring, fun and achieving'. The pupils consider the relationships between themselves and staff to be excellent. The school is calm, orderly and welcoming for pupils. This positive atmosphere is being managed extremely well by teachers and leaders within the school, despite the current building work that is taking place.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe, including the recruitment of suitable staff, are rigorous. Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors are appropriately trained. The leaders responsible for safeguarding, and the team that supports them, work together closely to keep pupils safe.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils report that they feel safe in all areas of the school. Parents and carers also agree that the school keeps pupils safe and secure. There is a dedicated team of staff that works determinedly, yet sensitively, with pupils, parents and external agencies, to help the more vulnerable pupils, particularly those who are anxious or suffer from mental health difficulties. An attendance officer has recently been appointed. Pupils who are absent are followed up and, if necessary, home visits are made to support the pupils' families. Attendance for all year groups, compared to last year, shows an improvement.
- Through assemblies and a tutor programme, leaders have ensured that pupils understand and manage risks they might face, including e-safety, sexting and road awareness. Pupils have a good understanding of these risks.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry related to the effectiveness of the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment in ensuring that progress and attainment is consistent across all subjects. This was because last year the outcomes, particularly the progress of disadvantaged pupils and boys, in business studies, drama, physical education, geography and history were below national averages,

in some cases significantly.

- You, along with other senior leaders, have identified that weak literacy skills, particularly of boys, and the inability of pupils to write at length have had an impact on the results in some subjects. External support has also been provided for some subject leaders and teachers.
- Pupils are using these writing skills within English lessons but they are not effectively applying them across all subjects. Pupils' work indicates that the school's literacy policy is not being applied by all teachers. All pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and boys, need to be given more opportunities to develop their extended writing skills. Strategies being used within key stage 3, through targeted reading programmes, are having a positive impact on pupils' reading ability.
- My second key line of enquiry was to evaluate the progress that the school has made since the last inspection. In 2017, GCSE results for the proportion of pupils achieving a grade 4 or 5 or above in English and mathematics were significantly above the national average. Within mathematics the results are particularly strong, and pupils are making progress that is significantly above the national average. The quality of teaching is variable between some subjects. Leaders, monitored closely by governors, are taking appropriate action to address this.
- Since the last inspection leaders have introduced a new behaviour and reward system. This system is now embedded across the school. In lessons and around the school site, pupils behave respectfully towards one another and staff. Pupils feel safe and secure, they value the pastoral support that is available. Pupil attendance was slightly below the national average last year. An attendance officer has been appointed to support pupils that fall below the school's attendance threshold. Where necessary, home visits are made to provide support for the family as well as the pupil. Attendance for this academic year has improved and is above the national average.
- Leaders are developing a new system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school. It is not yet fully embedded. A new target-setting and assessment system has been developed, and this is understood by teachers. It enables them to track and monitor pupils' progress more clearly and intervene with appropriate support.
- My third line of enquiry related to how effectively leaders were evaluating the curriculum to ensure that it is broad, balanced and meeting the needs of all learners, particularly disadvantaged pupils and boys. This was because the progress within some subjects for these groups and the percentage of disadvantaged pupils staying in education or entering employment were significantly below the national average.
- School leaders, including governors, have recently reviewed the curriculum. A detailed social education programme, focusing on fundamental British values, is being delivered during tutor periods. At key stage 4, leaders have changed the subjects to be offered and the number of subjects that pupils are studying. Local further education colleges have been consulted to ensure that these strategic decisions will not have an adverse impact on the opportunities for pupils when they leave the school. Year 8 pupils value the advice and guidance they have

been given in preparation for making their option choices.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a rigorous programme for developing cross-curricular literacy is embedded across the school, so all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, and boys, have opportunities to develop their extended-writing skills
- they monitor and evaluate their new curriculum model to ensure that it is broad and balanced, and meets the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and boys
- a system is established for teachers to share best practice, including the teaching of literacy, in questioning, challenging and providing effective feedback.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Kearsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we met you and your senior leaders, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. We visited many subject areas with you and your senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. We observed pupils during their breaks and lunchtimes and met pupils from every year group. We reviewed records about keeping pupils safe, and about attendance, and examined a wide range of other documentary evidence, including that relating to the school's ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation. We considered the views of 166 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, 240 responses to Ofsted's confidential pupil survey and 69 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.