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Mr Tom Bartlett
Principal
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Dear Mr Tom Bartlett

Short inspection of Waingels College

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2018 with Peter Fry and Alan Matthews, 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 July 2013.

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 appointment two years ago, you have led the school with compassion and determination. You are building an effective senior team of leaders who are equally committed to ensuring that pupils at your school do well. You have launched your vision and raised the expectations of the whole school community. You and your staff are determined to realise your ambition quoted on your website: 'To be an exceptional school, striving for excellence, at the heart of its community where better never stops'.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and strive to make improvements where needed. Leaders have honesty about areas to develop and stop at nothing to make things even better. You and your staff say convincingly, 'We are on a journey', and you recognise that while there are many strengths in the school there is still work to do. You are not yet happy with variations in the quality of teaching, learning and progress throughout the curriculum and across groups of pupils.

As a result of improvements that leaders have implemented, standards are rising rapidly. The previous inspection asked you to increase pupils' rates of progress. This you have achieved. In 2017, GCSE results showed that pupils made above-average rates of progress overall. They performed particularly well in English, mathematics and humanities, their rates of progress being in the top 20% of schools.

The sixth-form provision is strong, and students' progress in academic subjects places the school significantly above average. Sixth-form students are rightly proud of their achievements and their school. Students reported that they are supported well, especially when planning for life after Waingels College. The vast majority of students go on to further study at higher education or to employment. Sixth-form students are active in the life of the school and are good role models for younger pupils.

Leaders have overhauled many policies and procedures, ensuring that they gather views from all of the school community. Staff said that they feel valued as their opinions are considered when reshaping practices. One member of staff said, 'People have the courage to try new things and we share success.' In particular, you have remodelled the behaviour management policy successfully. Pupils and staff said that behaviour has improved markedly.

Pupils are proud to belong to Waingels College. Pupils experience a broad curriculum that includes opportunities for many extra-curricular activities, such as participating in national science competitions. Pupils behave well in lessons and have a good attitude towards learning.

Governors and trustees provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. They visit regularly and know the school well. They evaluate leaders' actions and ask robust questions should they find shortcomings. For example, when pupils' GCSE performance in science and modern foreign languages dipped in recent years, they commissioned an external review to find out how to improve these areas. As a result of the interventions and well-planned actions by school leaders, these subject areas are improving.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders take decisive action to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You follow safeguarding procedures when appointing staff, and all necessary checks are made thoroughly. Staff have regular training so that they are knowledgeable about procedures to keep pupils safe. Pupils said that they appreciate learning about safeguarding issues such as the dangers of extremism and cyber safety during personal, social and health education.

Leaders are taking positive steps to promote a caring school ethos and relationships in the school are respectful. Pupils reported that bullying is rare and decreasing. Pupils are looked after well should they have a concern. Staff and parents and carers agree that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- The focus of this inspection was to investigate specific areas of the school's provision: the progress of most-able pupils across all year groups including those that are disadvantaged, the progress of pupils who have special educational

needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum.

- There are many examples of strong teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. Leaders have particularly strengthened teaching in English and mathematics.
- In English, teachers plan engaging lessons that promote interest and challenge pupils to think deeply. Teachers provide models and structure so that pupils consider their responses well before embarking on writing. Pupils write with accuracy. A pupil in a group of Year 11 boys said, 'Our writing has improved a massive amount. Our confidence has grown as we know how to tackle a piece of writing.'
- In mathematics, pupils grapple purposefully to solve mathematical problems, often set in real-life scenarios. Teaching develops pupils' numerical skills well so that they can apply them readily. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and provide helpful advice to support pupils to improve.
- You have identified that, in recent years, pupils' progress in science and modern foreign languages has been weaker than in other subjects. Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently strong in these subjects. While improvements have been made, you are not yet satisfied that standards are high enough. There is also variability across other subjects, which is exemplified by the different rates of progress in pupils' work. Pupils also reported that not all subjects help them to make progress as rapidly as they might.
- Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that teaching consistently provides extra challenge to all pupils, including the most able. There is some evidence of most-able pupils being challenged, including in extended writing in English and in balancing equations in chemistry. However, most-able pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, do not always have similarly challenging activities in all subjects.
- Past examination results and information about current pupils show that differences between disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing. However, plans to support disadvantaged pupils are not always sharp enough so that pupils, including those in the sixth form, are not always provided with exactly what they need to make maximum progress.
- Leaders have recently strengthened support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers and some parents reported that pupils are supported well and are making good progress. A small number of parents expressed concern that their children who have moderate learning difficulties do not always have their needs met well. Leaders already have plans in place to intensify support for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they ensure more consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- teachers provide focused support to all pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities so they make higher rates of progress
- precise support is provided to pupils who are disadvantaged, including the most able, so that they make faster rates of progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Child
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior team, a group of staff, the chair of the board of trustees and two further trustees. They observed learning in 20 classes, all jointly with you or senior leaders. They scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and a sample of disadvantaged pupils' books from key stages 3 and 4. Inspectors took account of 154 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with an external leadership consultant who supports the school.

Inspectors took account of 83 responses from the staff questionnaire. They met with 21 pupils, representing all age groups and considered 195 responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

Inspectors analysed a range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation, information about pupils' achievement, safeguarding checks, policies and trustees' minutes of meetings.