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Parliament Hill Scho

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Ms Sarah Creasey
Headteacher
Parliament Hill School
Highgate Road
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Dear Ms Creasey

Short inspection of Parliament Hill School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 2018 with Sunday Ellis and David Plumeridge, 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since your appointment in September 2017, you have built on the success of the previous headteacher and you are strongly determined to improve even further.

The improvements in GCSE results noted in the previous inspection have continued. By judicious use of the extra funding, you have successfully addressed the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. The 2017 results showed that disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than other pupils nationally. However, while the variation in GCSE results between different subjects has been much reduced, pupils' performance in mathematics, though in line with the national average, was much weaker in 2017 than in other subjects. This is a priority for the school and was a focus for this inspection.

The school aims to empower pupils to become 'active world citizens'. An example of this ethos in action was seen in pupils' powerful and well-articulated speeches in an English lesson. When speaking to inspectors, pupils strongly supported the values of the school. 'Open-mindedness is encouraged,' one said. 'Teachers encourage us to listen to others' ideas and

then make our own decisions.'

Students in the sixth form are making progress in line with that of their peers nationally, and sixth-form leaders are untiring in their efforts to raise standards further. Students in the sixth form spoke highly of the helpful guidance they receive on university applications. The diverse range of destinations of past students, including Russell Group universities, is evidence of the impact of the advice they have been given. Your staff appreciated the opportunities afforded by the local consortium to work with teachers from other schools to meet the demands of the new A-level courses.

Inspectors observed high standards of behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are courteous and respectful. They show a strong appreciation of diversity and respect for others. As shown in the inspection findings, rates of exclusions have been reduced substantially. You have successfully maintained good levels of attendance.

The school has high levels of support from pupils, parents and carers. A significantly high number of parents responded to Parent View, and they are extremely positive about the school. Virtually all respondents would recommend Parliament Hill to other parents. Pupils are also appreciative of the support they receive from teachers. When they spoke to inspectors, they commented on the carefully considered feedback they receive about their work.

You and your leadership team are well supported by an effective team of governors who have a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They visit the school regularly and ask appropriately challenging questions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that a strong culture of safeguarding is embedded in the school. All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe and well looked after. Their parents agree. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The single central record of staff recruitment checks is comprehensive and up to date.

All staff are trained to an appropriate level and receive regular safeguarding updates. Pupils causing concern are carefully monitored, and appropriate referrals are made. Senior staff have carefully assessed local risks and have developed strong relationships with appropriate local partners to tackle them. Your curriculum, which is regularly evaluated, covers key safeguarding issues with pupils, including e-safety and bullying. Very rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly.

Inspection findings

- We first looked to see how well your strategies to reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions are working. In 2016, exclusion rates were higher than the national average, particularly among disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/ or disabilities. Your review of the school behaviour policy and improved staff training have had a positive impact. Pupils told inspectors that conduct in classrooms is much improved. Inspectors' own visits to classrooms confirmed this. Data collected by the school shows that your actions have halved the number of fixed-term exclusions over the past three years. Rates of exclusion for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now in line with the national average. While there is occasional inconsistency in classroom practice, your overall strategy to improve behaviour across the school has been successful in significantly reducing exclusions.
- We next investigated what actions you have taken to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. Although the most recent mathematics results show improvement on the previous year, pupils are still making less progress than in other subjects.
- Since September 2017, there has been new leadership of mathematics and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Lessons are generally well planned and encourage pupils to consolidate their knowledge and practise key skills. In visits to classrooms, inspectors saw pupils completing work conscientiously and asking questions to clarify their understanding. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are given opportunities to explain their thinking; high challenge creates strongly focused learning. However, there are still inconsistencies in applying new strategies. Challenge is sometimes lacking and assessment is not consistently used to focus pupils on next steps. Where this is the case, pupils appear to lack confidence in their mathematics skills.
- Your school's latest assessment information shows that pupils in the current Year 11 are performing better in mathematics than the previous year, and that the gap between pupils' progress in English and mathematics is narrowing in the lower school. Even so, improvements are not yet strong enough to bridge the gap between progress in mathematics and other subjects.
- We then agreed to focus on the impact of the school's approach to the curriculum in meeting pupils' needs and aspirations. The school aims to make the key stage 3 curriculum as enriching as possible, but with a relentless focus on literacy, high academic expectations and effective careers guidance to provide a strong basis for progression into key stage 4. Inspectors found that these aims have largely been met, although more needs to be done to introduce more careers education earlier in the key stage. The success of this approach is demonstrated in the large

numbers of pupils voluntarily choosing more academic subjects at GCSE.

- In key stage 4, three years ago, you decided to reduce the number of GCSEs that pupils can take and to start GCSE courses in the summer term of Year 9. Leaders have consulted parents and staff widely over these changes and, as a result, there is considerable parental support. For example, over two hundred parents attended a Year 11 revision skills workshop. Over half of the Year 11 cohort entered the English Baccalaureate last year and a much higher proportion of pupils achieved it than found nationally, including disadvantaged pupils. This is an impressive achievement for the school, showing that the overall impact of your approach to the curriculum is strong.
- Finally, we decided to evaluate the school's work to further improve results in the sixth form. A-level results overall in 2017 show that students made progress in line with the national average and there were no subjects in which performance was significantly low. To raise attainment further, leaders have prioritised the progress of the most able students, boys, and disadvantaged students. Leaders rigorously check that students are making appropriate progress and take effective action if they are not. Leaders also keep a watchful eye on teaching in the sixth form and intervene to work with staff to improve it where necessary.
- During visits to classrooms, inspectors found that teachers' sound subject knowledge, effective planning and a clear focus on examination technique are having a positive impact on students' progress. Across a range of subjects, students' folders are well organised and contain several examples of examination practice questions. However, some inconsistency in teaching quality was observed. For example, variation was seen in the effectiveness of discussion. In some sessions, students were highly articulate and used their prior knowledge well; in others, discussion lacked evidence of deep thinking or the challenge that should be characteristic of work at this level.
- The school's assessment information shows some improvement in students' progress compared with last year as a result of the school's work. However, you rightly acknowledge that more needs to be done to raise achievement in the sixth form.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more careful use is made of assessment to plan teaching and learning and raise outcomes in GCSE mathematics
- greater consistency in the quality of teaching and increasing levels of challenge contribute to progress in the sixth form.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of Camden Learning. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Whiting
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors visited 22 lessons across a range of subjects and covering all year groups, with a particular focus on mathematics and the sixth form. Sometimes with senior leaders, they observed the quality of teaching and learning and spoke to pupils about their work. They interviewed senior and middle leaders, governors, and pupils from across the age range. Inspectors observed behaviour around the school. They scrutinised documentation, pupils' work and the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.