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Mr Mark Marande
Principal
The Petersfield School
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Dear Mr Marande

Short inspection of The Petersfield School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Sue Bullen and Paul McKeown, 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 2014.

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.

Since your appointment in April 2016, you have built on the strong foundations of your predecessor. You are well supported by a determined and highly effective team of senior and middle leaders. Together, you have raised expectations and taken action to sharply accelerate pupils' progress.

You have gained the support of staff, pupils and parents and carers, all of whom hold you in high regard. Staff feel valued and empowered. Those who met with inspectors, and those who completed the staff survey, were remarkably positive about the school. All staff are proud to work at the school and feel that it is well led and managed. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school is well led and would recommend the school to another parent. Many parents commented on how their children have thrived in the school's warm, caring and supportive atmosphere.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching in the school. This has resulted in substantial increases in pupils' progress in all years,

and in pupils' improved GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11. In 2017, pupils' progress across the curriculum was above the national average. Outcomes were convincingly above average in most curriculum areas, particularly English, mathematics, humanities and the performing arts subjects. Outcomes in science also improved, but do not yet match the high standards achieved in other subjects. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is similar to that of other pupils with the same starting points. However, leaders are aware that there remains a gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils.

The atmosphere in your school is one of calm purpose and enjoyment of learning. Pupils' attendance is above the national average, and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are kind and respectful towards each other, their teachers and visitors. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of the environment. They appreciate the wide range of clubs and other activities on offer. This includes a large variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical, artistic and dramatic talents.

You, your leadership team and governors are ambitious for pupils and carefully consider their best interests in everything you do. Governors know the school very well and provide good challenge and support to you and other leaders. The partnership with the Bohunt Education Trust is bringing new opportunities for pupils and staff and ensures that self-evaluation is robust and reliable.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. All staff and governors receive helpful training, ensuring that they know how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

A dedicated and highly skilled team of pastoral staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside pupils, parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff closely monitor pupils causing concern, and interventions are meticulously recorded. Case studies discussed with inspectors showed evidence of the school's timely actions and thorough liaison with external providers to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being. Parents say that their children feel safe and are well cared for in school.

The curriculum prepares pupils very well for managing their own safety. A comprehensive and well-structured programme of activities delivered through lessons, tutor time and assemblies supports pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. The pupils that inspectors spoke to had a very confident understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have prioritised increasing the progress of disadvantaged pupils and they rigorously monitor the progress of this group of pupils. Additional pupil premium funding is now targeted carefully and extra help is making a positive difference to pupils' progress. In the past, disadvantaged pupils did not attain as well as their peers in their GCSE examinations. However, in 2017, their progress improved in all subjects. In English and humanities subjects, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was similar to the progress of other pupils nationally with the same starting points. Assessment information provided by school leaders shows that disadvantaged pupils in all year groups are making strong progress across the curriculum.
- During our careful review of pupils' work with leaders, we could see that disadvantaged pupils were making the same good progress as other pupils. Our visits to classes also confirmed that disadvantaged pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from improved teaching, particularly the school's consistent approach to assessment and feedback, which ensures that pupils know how to improve their work. One of the many positive examples inspectors found was in geography, where disadvantaged pupils had substantially improved their marks on a GCSE examination question as a result of using their teacher's helpful feedback. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is close to the national average in many subjects. Nevertheless, there remains a gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils.
- Leaders prioritise improving the quality of teaching, and their actions are making a significant difference. Leaders routinely coach other teachers and use school systems well to check that teaching remains consistently effective. Teachers demonstrate a passion for their subjects, and pupils' attitudes to their learning are overwhelmingly positive. Teachers ask questions which make pupils think hard, and work is well pitched to provide the right levels of challenge and support. Staff feel very well supported and take part in a range of developmental activities within the school and the academy trust that improve their practice.
- Leaders' actions to tackle previous weaknesses in science are beginning to have an impact. A new leadership structure, together with new teachers and a substantial training and support programme, have ensured that pupils are now making much better progress in science than they did in the past. However, leaders recognise that there is more work to do so that outcomes in science continue to improve and match those in other subjects.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school and ensures that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders have balanced carefully the needs of pupils with the requirements of the new school accountability measures. The curriculum has become more challenging and has a stronger academic focus to reflect pupils' high starting points in Year 7. In addition, a number of pupils benefit from studying more practical subjects at South Downs College. Key stage 4 pupils told inspectors that they are very well supported when making their option choices. Pupils' learning is extended and deepened through a wide range of additional clubs and activities, including those which offer extra challenge for most-able pupils. The number of pupils who go on to

study at the best universities is high and increasing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress, so that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils diminishes further
- they embed their work to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science, so that pupils attain as well in science as they do in other subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the Bohunt Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders, staff and governors. We spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited classes to observe learning, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. A range of documents and policies was considered, including leaders' self-evaluation, information about current pupils' progress, safeguarding information and evidence of the work of governors. The inspection team took account of the 264 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 48 responses to the Ofsted staff survey. Inspectors also considered the 129 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.