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Dear Dr Howe

Short inspection of Abbeywood Community School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018 with Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Ofsted Inspector, 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment in January 2015, you have successfully developed a collaborative culture among staff at the school. Last year, when financial pressures made a staff restructuring process necessary, this culture ensured that staff morale remained high. You have secured the confidence and support of the vast majority of parents. As a result, the school has grown in popularity; the number of pupils on roll is steadily rising.

Pupils' progress fell in 2017 in comparison to the previous year and consequently pupils' attainment was below average. You have used high-quality support from the trust, and other sources, to ensure that the progress of most groups of pupils currently in the school is now better. The rate of pupils' attendance, although below average, has been rising in recent years. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils in the specialist resource base receive expert help and support. Pupils welcome and accept each other regardless of their background and so the school is a friendly, orderly environment. Although the number of exclusions remains above average, this reflects the resolute stance you have taken on expectations of behaviour.

The quality of teaching across the school has not been consistent in recent years and consequently pupils' progress has varied between subjects. You have overcome

turbulence in staffing in some departments, especially in mathematics, where you have successfully established a stable team. However, there is still too much variability in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is well below the progress made by other pupils nationally. You have secured some improvement in the progress of this group of pupils, but too many of them still leave school without the basic qualifications they need.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that the most able pupils and sixth-form students make better progress. You have had some success in the sixth form. Students make good progress on applied programmes and the most able students' progress on academic programmes is showing signs of improvement. However, the most able pupils' progress in key stage 4 last year was below average and remains so for current pupils. You are acutely aware of this and recognise that it is an important priority for the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the school's policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are well organised and effective. Appropriate checks are made on all staff and volunteers to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. School records show that any concerns are logged promptly and followed up appropriately. The school works successfully with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and you have instilled in them a good awareness of other risks that they may face in the modern world. The great majority of parents believe that the school is a safe environment. Both pupils and parents say that any bullying that happens is dealt with quickly and effectively.

You make sure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. You provide regular training for staff and keep them updated when procedures change or when particular risks are identified. Consequently, you have established a vigilant safeguarding culture at the school.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders continually seek improvements in teaching and learning. They innovate and invest in staff development. For example, some teachers are given the opportunity to join an extended leadership team and so develop their leadership skills. Governors are knowledgeable about the performance of the school and, therefore, they challenge senior leaders robustly over the progress of specific groups of pupils.
- To decide whether the school remained good, one of the key lines of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and humanities. Pupils' progress in mathematics in 2017 was well below the national average. Pupils' attainment in GCSE mathematics, geography and history was below that which could be expected from their starting points. Senior leaders have been

creative in recruiting and retaining staff in shortage subjects. Fewer temporary teachers are now being used and so there is less disruption to pupils' learning. Expert coaching, from another school in the trust, is helping relatively inexperienced teachers develop their skills quickly. However, teaching is not yet securing strong progress for many pupils because teachers' expectations still vary too much. Some pupils are unclear about their current attainment and so they do not know which areas of their learning they need to put more work into.

- Another key line of enquiry evaluated the school's use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained a grade 5 or better in both GCSE English and mathematics was less than half that of other pupils nationally. Senior leaders have introduced more support for disadvantaged pupils this year, in addition to the extra help already being provided. For example, a specialist teaching assistant was appointed in December 2017 to help these pupils.
- Senior leaders' efforts to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance has been successful for some pupils, but the rate of attendance of this group still does not match that of other pupils. The trust has recently introduced extra leadership support in this area of the school's work. This is helping to pinpoint further actions required to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress. For example, ensuring that middle leaders check teaching is supporting disadvantaged pupils to overcome any particular difficulties in their subject areas.
- A third key line of enquiry considered the progress made by the most able pupils. In 2016 the most able pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was in line with the national average. In 2017, except in GCSE English, the most able pupils made less progress. Senior leaders provide training for teachers to take on new approaches so that teaching stretches these pupils. Teachers are receptive to new ideas, many incorporate them into their teaching. However, inspection evidence shows that these pupils are still not being challenged consistently across the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They say that it is a welcoming and inclusive place where all pupils are accepted. Pupils' transfer from primary school is supported by teachers very effectively. As a result, relationships between pupils and staff are typically positive and constructive from the beginning. One parent commented, 'The transition from primary to secondary went extremely well and our child is enjoying Abbeywood.' The vast majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are appropriately high, especially in mathematics and humanities subjects
- teachers use assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding to give pupils a clear picture of their current attainment and how they can improve
- disadvantaged pupils' attendance improves further

- middle leaders monitor disadvantaged pupils' progress within their departments to check that teaching is supporting these pupils' needs well
- teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils to deepen their understanding.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, the chief executive of the trust and senior leaders. I held a meeting with the chair of the governing body. We made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. We looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. We held meetings with pupils from key stages 3 and 4 and sixth-form students. We scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's development plans, assessment information, departmental reviews from the trust, records of recruitment checks and information relating to attendance. We took account of responses to questionnaires from 61 staff and 26 pupils. We considered 68 responses from parents to the Ofsted Parent View online survey.