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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Shirley Puxty
Principal
Coopers School
Hawkwood Lane
Chislehurst
Kent
BR7 5PS

Dear Mrs Puxty

Short inspection of Coopers School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018 with Gloria Lowe and Terry Millar, 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team's passion for the welfare of each individual pupil results in a very caring and supportive environment where pupils feel safe and happy. Attendance is a strength of the school. Pupils attend well, with attendance above the national average. Pupils said they like to come to school; they value the opportunities they have and the support they get from staff. One Year 7 pupil said, 'I love my school and couldn't think of a better school for me.'

A central part of the school experience is the wide range of enrichment activities, whether that be a trip to Africa for Year 10 students, trampolining, additional art classes or musical shows and events. Pupils very much appreciate these. Years 7 and 8 particularly enjoy the Thursday afternoon enrichment sessions when they can choose their activity. Inspectors were struck by the enthusiasm of the adults delivering the sessions and the enjoyment and engagement of pupils at this time. Pupils also spoke highly of the breadth of subject choice for options at key stages 4 and 5. One pupil said, 'There is something here for everybody.' This all reflects the commitment of your staff to giving pupils a vibrant school experience, for example dressing up for World Book Day or giving up their time to support shows, trips and visits. Staff have confidence in your leadership and are proud to be part of the school.

Governors show great commitment to the school. They value its comprehensive and inclusive nature. It is important to them that, despite the size of the school, each pupil gets that individual attention and focus. Governors visit the school regularly and scrutinise detailed and thorough reports on pupils' progress. They hold leaders to account through challenging questions about what could be even better. For example, although fixed-term exclusions are low and support for pupils is already considerable, they want to know if there are yet other strategies that can be used.

This involvement by the governors in setting targets and monitoring outcomes has been an important factor in significantly improving pupils' GCSE outcomes in 2017 to broadly average by the end of key stage 4. It has also supported students' consistently positive progress in the sixth form in the different subjects offered. Sixth-form students spoke highly of the support available in the school and how this helps them become independent learners; they also welcomed the leadership opportunities available to them.

Since the previous inspection, you have focused on developing teaching through, for example, individualised coaching for new staff and mentoring training for middle leaders. In addition, improved use of pupil-level data means you have been able to take pre-emptive action to fill in any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This has resulted in improved outcomes, addressing areas for development identified at the time of the previous inspection. The most able pupils now make progress in line with other pupils and there is a greater percentage of high grades at GCSE and A level. Girls' progress has also improved in both mathematics and science and is in line with boys' progress in these subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Together with the other leaders, you have established a strong culture of safeguarding and care for pupils. The safety and welfare of pupils is given top priority. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are kept carefully and with high levels of confidentiality. They are detailed and show the school reacts quickly to any concerns, contacting external agencies as needed. New staff recruitment is subject to diligent checks by senior staff and governors. Safeguarding training is up to date and the school builds in regular updates during the year to make sure that staff and governors understand their duties to promote pupils' welfare. Staff are vigilant to warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and report these promptly.

Pupils told us that they feel very safe at the school and trust staff to act in the event of any concerns. The vast majority of parents who completed the school's parental questionnaire agree that their children are safe and happy at school.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, progress was broadly in line with national averages. For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to focus on what actions were being taken by leaders to ensure that these outcomes were maintained. We chose mathematics and languages in key stages 3 and 4 for separate scrutiny as you had rightly identified these subjects for sustained improvement.
- Improvements in languages have been closely monitored by governors. This monitoring has helped keep developments high profile and supported improved outcomes in 2017. Pupils use target language confidently, have high levels of engagement and benefit from teachers' feedback. Your data shows that progress is on course to be sustained in 2018.
- Pupils made average progress in mathematics in 2017, with higher-attaining pupils making strong progress. Leaders explained how improved tracking of individual pupils' progress, early intervention in Years 7 and 8 and targeted topic support at key stage 4 underpinned this improvement. Lessons are purposeful with well-structured questioning which helps to consolidate pupils' learning. Pupils show perseverance with challenging work. For example, in a Year 8 higher-ability class, all pupils were fully engaged in tackling inverse proportion.
- We also saw many examples of strong pupil engagement in other subject lessons. Teachers use their subject knowledge well and plan activities that allow students to develop their understanding. Open-ended questioning encourages students to think more deeply. Pupils explained how they consolidated their learning by responding to teachers' advice. However, in some classes, questioning was less effective or advice to support progress was less evident.
- Subject leaders told us that you are supportive in developing teaching. They described initiatives to focus on high-quality teaching, for example in challenging the most able pupils. They described how the use of collapsed timetable days helped to accelerate pupils' progress. They listed successful interventions for pupils, for example Easter and after-school courses that helped pupils overcome barriers in their learning. They supported your focus on careers advice and raising aspirations to help pupils understand how being successful at school could realise their future hopes.
- We next looked at how successful you and your leaders have been in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, given that you have rightly identified that this is an area for improvement. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attend well. The emphasis on careers has helped pupils understand the importance of school outcomes to their life chances. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds said they felt happy at school, were well supported and would recommend the school to others. Small-group intense booster sessions in core subjects have also helped to improve their outcomes.
- As a result, in 2017 the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds improved overall and was broadly in line with the national average for this group by the end of key stage 4. However, you recognise that targeted

individual advice is needed to ensure that these pupils achieve in line with other pupils.

- Finally, we looked at how effectively leaders and teachers ensure that pupils' behaviour in lessons supports their learning. This is because at the time of the previous inspection inspectors identified the need to address low-level chatter.
- You have ensured that there are clear expectations of behaviour, and that low-level chatter is subject to challenge. Pupils know the routines and explained these to inspectors. They also said that pupils behaved well in lessons. Inspectors visited lessons where pupils were strongly focused on the activities set, with no off-task chatter.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in outcomes are maintained by ensuring that high-quality questioning to develop understanding, coupled with individually targeted advice to support progress, is implemented consistently across all lessons
- strategies for disadvantaged pupils are used consistently to support improved outcomes.

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 Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Allott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, senior and middle leaders and other staff, and held a meeting with the chair of the governing body and other governors. We made joint visits to classrooms with you and other leaders. We carried out scrutinies of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils. We undertook a scrutiny of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, safeguarding information and records, and data on pupils' achievement and attendance. We carried out a review of the school's website. We considered the responses to parental questionnaires gathered by the school and 27 responses from staff to the Ofsted survey.