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Mrs Caroline Wilson
Principal
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of Ormiston Sudbury Academy

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Vanessa Love, 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 June 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 provide strong and passionate leadership which is focused on providing your pupils with the best possible education, both in and out of the classroom. You are committed to providing a broad and balanced curriculum and, as a consequence, pupils are able to experience a wide range of learning opportunities. You have taken decisive action to make important curriculum changes, for example providing additional time for English and mathematics across the school and enabling your most-able pupils to spend longer studying GCSE science. As a consequence, pupils' overall progress at the end of key stage 4 has been in line with, or above, the national average for the last three years.

You have high expectations of staff and pupils and you are committed to ensuring that pupils are well cared for. Leaders and staff share your vision. They are proud of the wide range of support that your pupils receive. They say that the smaller size of your school is its greatest asset as it enables all pupils to be known as individuals. Pupils agree, with one saying, 'We are all welcome and staff help no matter what.'

You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and your improvement plans are robust and focused on appropriate priorities. As a consequence, leaders have made good progress towards the areas identified in your previous inspection report. Through close monitoring and support, leaders accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school.

They demonstrate impact when helping teachers improve their practice and they have improved the overall quality of teaching. Your particular focus on improving pupils' progress in mathematics and science has led to significant improvements in both subjects. Your work to improve the consistency of progress across the sixth form was not reflected in the 2017 examination results, where students' overall progress was below average. However, the impact of your strategies is evident in the work of those students currently attending the sixth form.

The Ormiston Academies Trust and your local governing body provide you with effective support and challenge. There are strong links across the trust at both governance and leadership levels. This provides you, members of the governing body and school leaders with additional expertise, both when reviewing your progress and when planning for next steps. You, leaders and governors are in agreement that key improvement priorities include embedding the school's new behaviour policy and ensuring consistent challenge for pupils of all abilities in lessons. You also acknowledge that there is a need to re-engage those parents and carers who have a negative view of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders undertake all appropriate checks on staff and these records are scrutinised on a regular basis by a nominated member of the governing body. Staff are well trained and know how to identify any signs that pupils are at risk. Staff understand the school's systems for reporting concerns and they said that safeguarding is a part of the school's culture. Safeguarding records are well kept and any child protection referrals are monitored robustly.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through assemblies and tutorial sessions that cover topics such as e-safety, bullying and sex and relationships education. They said that their school is a safe place and that they are well looked after. Pupils know who to talk to if they have any problems and they value the wide range of support available at the school.

Inspection findings

- We pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school continues to be good. Our first question related to the extent to which leaders are ensuring that students currently in the sixth form make good or better progress. Following a thorough review of sixth-form provision, leaders have acted decisively to ensure that students' progress improves. Students are now provided with more effective guidance to ensure that they study the most appropriate courses. Leaders undertake regular and robust monitoring of the sixth form, and the profile of the sixth form is now higher within the school. Students said they are very well supported by the sixth-form team and that expectations of them are high. They value their study areas, the advice that they are given by their

teachers and their wider roles as ambassadors across the school.

- As a result of leaders' actions, the progress of students currently in the sixth form is good and improving. Where progress is particularly strong, it is as a result of teachers' high levels of subject knowledge, which they use effectively to question pupils, offer support and provide additional challenge. Positive relationships between staff and students mean that students are confident to take risks, while teachers' planning is effective in taking into account students' different starting points. Students' improving progress is supported by leaders' assessment records, which demonstrate that students currently in the sixth form are performing better than in previous years.
- A second line of enquiry related to leaders' success in ensuring that current pupils make good or better progress in English. Leaders have appropriate plans in place and are implementing a range of strategies to improve pupils' progress in English. Leaders have high expectations of both teachers and pupils and they have ensured that a focus on the key skills required for success in English is being embedded across the school. Teachers now have a far deeper understanding of the requirements of the English curriculum and they provide additional support for pupils who fall behind.
- Leaders' and teachers' higher expectations of what pupils can achieve are evident both in English lessons and in the results of pupils' assessments. Pupils in Year 11 are currently performing at a higher level than similar pupils did in previous years, while work seen in books demonstrates that pupils across the school are also being supported to make better progress. In lessons, pupils make good progress when they participate in high-quality discussion and when they are clear about the activities that they are undertaking. Although the overall progress of pupils in English is improving, you acknowledge that not all pupils are making the progress that you expect and that pupils are not always challenged sufficiently from their different starting points.
- Finally, we wanted to check the extent to which pupils (and especially those who are disadvantaged) attend and behave well. Leaders have strong and effective systems in place to monitor pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders build strong relationships with pupils and their families, offer a wide range of support from school staff and work closely with other professionals who offer additional help to pupils. As a consequence, the rates of absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers are reducing.
- Your recent changes to the school's behaviour policy have been well received by pupils, staff and many of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. There is now greater clarity around what is expected of pupils. Pupils said that staff are very consistent in applying the new changes to the policy, but that some other elements of the policy are not always applied as consistently.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They are polite, friendly and welcoming. The number of disadvantaged pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions has reduced. However, there has been an increase in the overall number of fixed-term exclusions this year. You link this to the increased expectations of the

new behaviour policy and you expect this to decline as the policy becomes embedded.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent changes made to the school's behaviour policy are embedded and that all elements of it are applied consistently by staff
- teaching, especially in English, is planned to increase challenge further for all pupils from their different starting points
- they seek and consider parents' views, strengthening the school's partnership with parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Ormiston Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, school leaders, other school staff, trustees, representatives of the trust and groups of pupils. Together with you and other school leaders, we made short visits to a wide range of classes to observe teaching, to look at pupils' books and to see pupils at work. We also reviewed samples of pupils' work alongside school leaders. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record and records of child protection. We also considered the 105 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 55 responses from staff to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and the 23 responses from pupils to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire.