

5 April 2018

Mr Gavin Saunders  
Headteacher  
Shipston High School  
Darlingscote Road  
Shipston-on-Stour  
Warwickshire  
CV36 4DY

Dear Mr Saunders

### **Short inspection of Shipston High School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018 with Andrea Quigley, 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 February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As the new headteacher in September 2015, supported by a strong leadership team and trustees, you analysed what needed to be done. This included reviewing recommendations from the previous inspection. You developed your leadership team, creating new posts as part of this process. These focused upon teaching and learning and systems to track pupils' progress. It was also necessary to plan the long-term future of the school, meeting the increasing demand for places.

There were good outcomes as a result of this work. At the previous inspection, there were recommendations to accelerate the achievement of lower-ability and disadvantaged pupils. In 2016 and 2017 these pupils made strong progress. A new classroom block is being built to accommodate growing numbers of pupils from September 2018. These successes demonstrate leaders' capacity for further improvement.

At our initial meeting you said, 'It's all about the learning.' Trustees were also clear about the link between high-quality teaching and pupils' progress. Inspectors' evidence supports the success of your focus upon classroom-based school improvement in terms of the quality of teaching and outcomes. Moreover, the 'Shipston Values' of learning, respect, ambition and achievement are reflected in the positive attitudes of pupils.

Pupils are a credit to you. They speak positively about how much they enjoy school, make friends and feel safe. Pupils are unfailingly polite to visitors and are articulate when asked about their learning and wider experiences. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills, especially as prefects in Year 11. Pupils in all year groups stand for election to the student council, help run the library and organise charity events.

Pupils' conduct is commendable. Exclusions for poor behaviour are rare. This academic year there have been no repeat exclusions. There are supportive programmes in place for pupils, including the STAR Centre, in which staff help pupils manage their emotions and behaviour. The atmosphere in this centre is relaxed and purposeful. Pupils appreciate the effective pastoral system. Pupils say that some off-task behaviour occurs in certain lessons but this is dealt with quickly. Inspectors saw excellent conduct and attitudes to learning.

While you are pleased with progress overall, you know that more is required to improve outcomes for most-able pupils and for boys. To some extent leaders are aware of, and have addressed, the priorities identified during the inspection. Nonetheless, leaders and trustees agree that the way they plan and review performance is not always sharp enough.

Over time, attendance has been well above national averages. Current attendance figures are lower, partly due to the winter flu outbreak. Also, a small number of pupils with complex medical issues have a disproportionate impact on attendance figures. The underlying picture is one of pupils attending regularly.

Parents think very highly of the school. The overwhelming majority who replied to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Parents feel that pupils are safe, happy, taught well and make good progress. Some typical comments from parents included: 'Fabulous school', 'This is an excellent school and my child is doing very well' and 'Friendly school, children well behaved and supportive'.

Trustees contribute significantly to the strength in leadership and management. They know their statutory duties and the school very well. Trustees are focused upon short-term and long-term priorities. They monitor outcomes, for example through a governor overseeing disadvantaged pupils and the most able. Trustees understand information about pupils' achievement and appreciate the way that it is presented by leaders. Trustees have secured capital funding to accommodate the increasing numbers of pupils. They monitor the budget closely. The knowledge that trustees bring to the school is beneficial. For example, there is expertise in education, information technology, local government and property development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders are knowledgeable about systems, individuals and issues in the locality. Trustees receive updates about safeguarding on a regular basis. The link

trustee meets regularly with designated leaders. Staff know how to raise a safeguarding concern and the appropriate actions to take. Training for staff is regular and relevant. There is close and effective work with external agencies to support the most vulnerable. Inspectors identified some administrative and practical issues which needed to be addressed. Staff completed these before the end of the inspection.

The site and environment are safe. Although at the time of the inspection certain parts of the building were out of bounds because of mock examinations, pupils socialised and queued for food calmly. The major building work taking place has no impact on pupils' movement around the site or their safety.

### **Inspection findings**

- The progress made by most-able pupils fell markedly in 2017. This was across most subject areas, especially science. Work to address this is evident. Teachers' strong subject knowledge encourages pupils to use key and complex terminology. Questioning is rigorous, requiring pupils to solve problems and apply their knowledge. Training for staff has a focus upon improving outcomes for the most able. For example, a school improvement group has been set up to look at pace, stretch and challenge. Pupils have opportunities to attend classes aimed at achieving the higher grades at GCSE. They can attend trips to universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Assessment information, supported by inspection evidence, indicates improvements in the progress of most-able pupils because of the actions taken. Leaders accept that there is still work to be done to increase these pupils' progress further.
- Boys' attainment overall and in English and mathematics is above that of girls. However, although the progress that boys make is in line with the national average, it is lower than that of girls, who make stronger progress over time. Moreover, far fewer boys than girls achieve qualifications in modern foreign languages. The staff adopt specific strategies to address the needs of boys. These include a focus upon modern foreign languages at key stage 3, catch-up classes and mentoring. Leaders' focus upon careers education provides an incentive for boys to see several possible routes for realising their aspirations. Inspectors spoke to pupils at key stage 4, who could all explain how the careers programme was of benefit to them. Leaders are addressing the issue of boys' attainment with some success, but realise that more is required.
- Although assessment information indicates that boys are making steady progress, it still lags behind that of girls in some subjects. There is insufficient work across departments to learn about what works best. For example, in mathematics all pupils make strong progress, and boys' progress is better than that of girls. However, science leaders do not meet with their counterparts in mathematics to learn from their successes.
- Leaders act upon issues identified in their self-evaluation. For example, they have reviewed the curriculum recently to reduce the number of GCSE courses that pupils study. Leaders feel that this greater specialism will benefit boys especially. There are also plans to improve outcomes and take-up in modern

foreign languages, with more targeted work being done at key stage 3. Nevertheless, leaders, including governors, accept that self-evaluation needs to become more precise and focused.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff share good practice across the school to reduce the variability of outcomes for departments and groups of pupils
- systems for planning and monitoring are sharper, enabling leaders to focus more closely upon the impact of their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Nigel Griffiths  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, leaders, trustees and staff. They spoke with two groups of pupils formally and other pupils informally. They visited classes, at times with senior leaders, to observe learning, and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils at social times, in the canteen and between lessons. They considered documentary evidence, including that related to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the progress of current pupils and the work of governors. Inspectors took account of 60 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 58 written comments. There were no returns to the pupil or staff surveys.