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Mr George Smith  
Headteacher  
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Warwickshire  
CV11 4QH

Dear Mr Smith

### **Short inspection of Oak Wood Secondary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2018 with Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, 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 July 2013.

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

Through your inspiring and visionary leadership, you and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education and addressed the majority of areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff work together effectively to ensure that the school is a calm and friendly place where pupils do well both socially and academically to prepare them to be successful in their next stage of learning and life. Vibrant displays reinforce the values of the school and its community. Staff make a positive difference to the lives of pupils and their families. The pastoral care provided by the school is a significant strength. One parent spoke for many when they said, 'The school has a good ethos and follows it through in practice.' The staff work hard to develop relationships with pupils, parents and carers to ensure that pupils are able to make progress. This is supported by another parent who reported, 'His teacher and TAs have taken the time to get to know him and his needs and work with me all the time. He has come on so much, it's hard to believe.'

Your ambitious vision for the school is shared by governors, leaders and the majority of your staff team. Governors are well informed and have an excellent overview of the school's effectiveness. They told me that, since your appointment, they feel more welcome in school and are better informed about the school's performance and what needs to be worked on next. You provide them with accurate and accessible progress information. Consequently, governors are able to hold you and other leaders fully to account for your work. Governors told inspectors, 'There is now a higher focus on learning targets', and you have created a school that is calm and welcoming.

Since the previous inspection, leadership capacity has improved further following the appointment of new senior leaders, including your own appointment less than two years ago. You work cohesively as a senior team and have a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement and of how to achieve them. This is borne out by evidence of an upward trend in the rate at which pupils learn and make progress. However, both inspection evidence and your self-evaluation make it clear that the work to embed strategies fully in all curriculum areas has yet to have a sustained impact on pupil progress.

All staff are now more skilled in using a range of communication methods. As a result, pupils understand better what is expected, and this is enabling them to become more independent in their learning.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They have a real sense of community. This was reinforced when pupils told inspectors that they sign at school council meetings to ensure that everyone is included and understands what is happening. They described how they can share any concerns with staff and how they are able to help other pupils to 'sort out' friendships in the 'right way'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's arrangements to safeguard and support the well-being of pupils are clear and highly effective. The designated safeguarding lead demonstrates a detailed knowledge of pupils and fully understands their role and the responsibilities of all staff. As a result of detailed and frequent staff training, staff are able to identify risks and safeguarding issues that are most relevant to the needs of pupils and their families. Staff are confident in using the school's systems and procedures to report concerns, and senior staff promptly follow up concerns and put in place appropriate support. All incidents are recorded carefully and followed up rigorously with the appropriate agencies if required. As a result, vulnerable pupils and their families are given the support and advice they need quickly. Child protection records are of a good quality and are securely stored.

Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally throughout the inspection. Pupils were able to tell inspectors how staff help them to keep themselves safe online. Pupils' understanding of being a good citizen is developed through a wide-ranging personal, social and health education programme, assemblies, educational visits and visiting theatre groups. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school and that staff help them if they are anxious, upset or worried about anything.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of this inspection, we agreed to focus on attendance, the progress pupils are currently making, use of communication and the development of basic skills in all curriculum areas. Focusing on these areas would demonstrate the impact of leaders' work on securing improvements.
- Leaders have recognised the need to involve other agencies to support pupils

and families to improve attendance. As a result of external support and the development of effective partnerships between home and school, overall attendance is improving, and the level of persistent absences is decreasing. The school does not currently have a rewards system for good attendance.

- The introduction of a de-escalation approach to managing pupil behaviour, supported by high-quality training for staff, has significantly reduced the incidents of physical interventions and fixed-term exclusions. This cultural change has resulted in a calm, purposeful learning environment where pupils feel safe and are able to re-engage in learning more quickly. In addition to this, staff have now become more confident in dealing with the source of pupils' anxieties and challenges, and the vast majority of pupils can see the benefit of this approach.
- It was clear to inspectors that you and your senior team have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You are able to prioritise these areas and ensure that plans are drawn up to deliver the improvements; an example of this is the development of the communication strategy, which is now evident across the school. As a result, pupils are more engaged in their learning.
- The staff reflect constantly on how to improve pupils' educational experiences. You recently evaluated the provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and identified that this group of pupils did not do as well as they should. As a result, you are now in the early stages of following a much more structured approach, based on recognised national standards for teaching pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. This has been positively received by pupils and parents, and early signs are that this approach is having a positive influence on pupils' progress.
- Staff are becoming more skilled in developing pupils' communication and interaction skills through the school's 'total communication environment'. This is a strength of the school. Inspectors noted staff across the school consistently using a range of communication strategies, including non-verbal prompts such as signing, pictures, objects and symbols, to improve pupils' understanding of their work and the environment. This helps them engage more readily with activities and to express feelings, emotions or thoughts.
- Your assessment system is built on 'I can' statements, which staff use to record progress and plan highly differentiated work for pupils' next steps of learning. As a result of this detailed level of planning, more pupils are engaged in learning and make progress. This enables you and your team to use the information about pupils' progress to monitor teacher performance and to hold them successfully to account.
- Judgements about pupil progress made are moderated internally and externally. Inspection evidence confirms that the school's progress information is accurate. Leaders are aware that some pupils need to be set more challenging work. However, all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make appropriate progress across each key stage. Current progress information demonstrates that leaders are addressing the small variations in progress between groups of pupils.
- Through your analytical approach, you and senior leaders have a clear understanding of how well pupils are achieving. This information is used to

support staff to further develop their skills in developing opportunities for reading and writing across the whole curriculum.

- A new calculations policy has been developed, standardised resources supplied and staff supported to understand how to use the resources to improve their teaching of number. Leaders agree with inspectors that this area is still somewhat underdeveloped. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that opportunities to teach number in all curriculum areas are exploited more.
- A key stage 3 lesson on myths and legends provided pupils with opportunities to learn using a practical 'hands-on' approach. As a result, pupils were totally immersed in their learning. Through skilful, motivational questioning, the teacher helped pupils to demonstrate the depth of their knowledge and the progress they had made during this programme of study. Leaders shared with inspectors their plans to enhance the curriculum further with a greater emphasis on this type of practical approach to learning across all subjects.
- All pupils move onto further education, training or, in some cases, employment when they leave the school. Pupils receive impartial and good-quality careers guidance, which helps them make informed choices about their future.
- The school's aim to increase future employment rates for pupils is supported by the significant increase in post-16 work experience opportunities and the development of supported internships. The school is working hard to ensure that these opportunities are sustainable by increasing the links they have with local employers and the development of more vocational learning opportunities.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a consistent approach to teaching number across the curriculum is achieved and that opportunities for practising number and other basic skills are an integral part of all lessons
- pupils' experiences of learning are further enriched by the use of more practical 'hands-on' opportunities for learning in lessons
- the curriculum for older pupils provides more opportunities for vocational learning
- a system is developed to encourage and reward good and improving attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Field  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the head of school, other leaders, staff, the chair of the management board and the school's school improvement partner. Inspectors visited 12 lessons with school leaders and looked at pupils' books and files.

Inspectors met with the school council and talked to pupils formally and informally about their experiences. Pupils' behaviour was observed on arrival at school and during social times.

Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents including the whole school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records.

Inspectors scrutinised information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety. Inspectors also reviewed the information published on the school's website.