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Miss Rachel Kruger
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Dear Miss Kruger

Short inspection of The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2018 with Jenny Gaylor and Martin O'Sullivan, 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Pupils make exceptionally strong progress. In 2017, at the end of Year 11, pupils' progress overall placed the school in the top 3% of all schools nationally, a further improvement on outcomes from 2016. There is a high degree of consistency in pupils' progress across subjects and pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils. The most able pupils do exceptionally well, with progress in the top 1% of all schools nationally.

You and your team are committed to ensuring that the school is fully inclusive, and that all pupils are given the support they need to succeed. Pupils' standard of work across year groups shows that this is becoming a reality. You keep the curriculum under review, and have made several changes to ensure that pupils are well prepared for further study while maintaining a broad range of subjects. Similarly, in the sixth form you have extended the range of subjects and courses on offer. You are an outward-facing school, and maintain very effective links with the local authority and other schools to support school improvement.

Governors support leaders effectively, and review leaders' practice so that they can provide them with greater challenge. For example, in 2016, governors set up a new sub-committee, the inclusion committee. This enables governors to support the development of the school's inclusive ethos, have greater scrutiny of information and hold leaders to account more effectively for the safety and well-being of pupils.

During the inspection, some feedback from parents and pupils indicated widely differing views of the school's effectiveness. These views contrasted markedly with those from the school's own surveys and other inspection evidence. Leaders have already identified communication with parents as an area for improvement. The inspection team agrees that this is a key priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safeguarding policy is detailed and comprehensive; evidence demonstrates that this policy is followed in practice and underpins the school's approach effectively. Leaders have developed effective partnerships with Ealing children's services and other external agencies.

There is a comprehensive curriculum programme to help pupils learn to keep themselves safe, in the form of enrichment days and the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and safeguarding assemblies. For example, Year 10 and 11 pupils attended a child sexual exploitation awareness day. Leaders run an induction session on keeping safe for Year 6 pupils in July, before they join the school in September. Pupils confirm that these sessions are useful and informative, and help them to stay safe. Sessions are also offered to parents, for example on online safety. Posters in all classrooms and around the school make it clear to whom pupils should go for help, and provide external phone numbers for pupils who may prefer to talk to others. Parents and some pupils raised concerns about bullying. However, inspection evidence found that robust systems for recording, reporting and investigating bullying incidents are in place. Case studies and analysis of information show that actions taken are reducing repeat offences.

Inspection findings

- The first inspection focus was the progress of pupils with low prior starting points, including some pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The progress of this group of pupils is still above national averages, and has improved slightly since 2016. However, in 2017 this group of pupils made less progress in comparison with other groups in the school.
- Leaders have identified the key barriers to success for pupils through an external review of the provision, discussion with pupils and regular visits to classrooms to evaluate pupils' learning. There is a clear action plan in place to make the changes required and this is having an impact. For example, pupil target sheets are used to pinpoint specific strategies that will meet pupils' needs. Pupils'

positive attitudes to learning, and outcomes in speaking and writing show that this is having a positive impact.

- Nevertheless, there are still some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of support for the pupils with low starting points. Pupils confirm that the support they get is helpful, but does vary; one pupil reported, 'Not every teacher knows exactly what I need in terms of help.'
- Secondly, we explored the school's evident strengths in English, humanities, modern foreign languages and social studies, and whether current pupils continue to achieve strongly in these subjects. Historically, pupils' progress in these subjects has been well above average.
- Teaching in these subjects is characterised by purposeful learning and high expectations. Pupils are fully involved in their learning; they participate well and develop positive attitudes to their studies. Teachers question pupils skilfully to enable them to explore ideas in depth. Teachers use subject language consistently well and this is reflected in pupils' use of complex and mature vocabulary and dialogue. As a result, pupils can marshal and evaluate new knowledge, articulate their views and opinions and engage in critical conversations about the subject extremely well. Teachers use high-quality resources, which are well chosen to match pupils' skills and aptitudes so that their needs are well met. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils continue to make strong progress in these subjects.
- Finally, we looked at how leaders are tackling the inconsistencies in outcomes in the sixth form. Overall, in 2017, pupils' progress in sixth form A-level courses was above average. However, there was some variability across subjects.
- Leaders' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form provision is searching and thorough. They know exactly how well the sixth form is performing, and have taken decisive and effective action to make improvements. At this point in the year, assessment information indicates that students are now making better progress in these less strong subjects, art and design, health and social care and biology. Students are extremely positive about the sixth form. They rate the quality of teaching highly, and are confident that the provision supports their aspirations well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff use the information about pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and their assessment information to plan activities which enable pupils to make consistently strong progress
- communication with parents is improved. Leaders should listen to parents' concerns and address them. Leaders also need to communicate changes and their rationale more clearly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Ealing. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors met with the headteacher and senior team to review the school's self-evaluation, agree the key foci of the inspection and plan the inspection activities. Inspectors visited classes, some with senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning and to look at their work. Inspectors talked to pupils and listened to their views in classes and around the school; they also met with two groups of pupils to explore their views in more depth. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and held telephone conversations with the local authority's principal adviser and the designated safeguarding officer. Inspectors evaluated a range of documents and met with a group of staff to discuss the impact of their work and their views of the school. Inspectors considered the responses to the school's own parental surveys; the 50 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View; and other communications from parents. Inspectors considered the 168 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.