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Mr Paul Foxley
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Dear Mr Foxley

Short inspection of Purbrook Park School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018 with Ben Ramdhony, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your leadership, over the past six years, has been much appreciated by governors, staff and pupils. Your clear commitment to ensure that every pupil succeeds, regardless of his or her background or ability, is shared by all your staff. Staff are proud to be part of your school. You and your leadership team believe passionately that the school makes a difference to pupils' future chances in life and use this as a basis for your determination and commitment. One parent commented 'Purbrook prepares every child for moving on in life and adulthood to be successful and a credit to society.' The school's increased popularity is reflected in more parents and carers requesting it as a first choice than in the past. A waiting list is now in place for September 2018 for Year 7 pupils.

Pupils are a credit to the school. 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. Pupils value the effective pastoral system. Inspectors saw very good conduct and attitudes to learning by pupils throughout the school, as well as an enjoyment in what they do. A Year 7 pupil commented, 'I know this is the place for me.'

You have tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with some success. For example, improvements to teaching have ensured that teachers give regular feedback to pupils about their work and check that they respond

appropriately. Pupils welcome the verbal feedback from teachers, recognising that it helps them deal with any misunderstandings they have. Equally, teachers now expect and promote higher standards of writing and presentation of pupils' work. This was strongly evident in the range of written work seen in key stage 3, where many pupils now write confidently and with greater accuracy.

You and your senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the current strengths of your school and what needs to improve further. Your robust self-evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance has improved well since the last inspection. The plans for whole-school developments are derived from your self-evaluation. However, they lack specific targets for what pupils' outcomes should be by the end of this and next year; nor do they have appropriate timescales for monitoring progress. You know this needs to be rectified. However, other documents you supplied to inspectors show that such information is a major driver for overall improvement in the school's work.

Governors receive regular updates on pupils' progress and interrogate this information closely. They make good use of their breadth of skills and experience to hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided. Governors are actively involved in the school, know its strengths and weaknesses in detail, and carry out their statutory duties astutely. However, they know that the school's website needs updating to include recent information on the impact of the funding given for pupil premium last year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Your senior leader responsible for safeguarding is vigilant and proactive. She is well supported in this work by the heads of house and other staff. The school's referral procedures and communication with external agencies are good. This means that information is shared effectively and in a timely way. Staff and governors receive appropriate training in child protection. The school curriculum is adapted well to ensure that pupils understand about female genital mutilation and 'Prevent' duty issues around extremism and radicalisation, for example. A range of policies relating to safeguarding are in place but are not integrated into the main policy. Until very recently, the safeguarding policy published on the school's website was two years out of date.

Pupils made clear to inspectors that they felt safe in school. They said that bullying was rare and that staff dealt swiftly with any concerns. Through the personal, social and health education programme, pupils said that they have learned about keeping safe online, as well as disability rights and homophobia. Pupils demonstrate respect for, and genuine interest in, the views and opinions of others. Parents agree that their children are safe and happy in the school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed three lines of enquiry at the beginning of the inspection, as well as determining that the school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. In particular we agreed to focus on the effectiveness of the provision for disadvantaged pupils across all year groups, the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of leaders' actions

to improve pupils' progress from their starting points when they join the school.

- The difference in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is now narrowing. In 2017, the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils were closer to national averages than in the past. Leaders now ensure that focused support is provided whenever individual pupils lag behind. Pupils' progress towards their targets is rigorously analysed, and teachers' awareness of how to engage pupils in their learning has been raised successfully.
- In key stage 3, we judged that the work of disadvantaged pupils in books and their responses in lessons were as good as those of their peers. In the most effective subjects, teachers adapt the way they teach to address the particular needs of disadvantaged pupils and provide the support that many of them need. When this is successful, there is little discernible difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers. This was notably evident in English, mathematics and humanities.
- However, you and other leaders know that more needs to be done so that disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 make better progress. A range of catch-up sessions before and after school are in place, as well as some small-group work to deal with any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge demanded by GCSE examinations. These approaches are having some positive impact.
- Your work in the last three years to make the curriculum more responsive to pupils' needs has been effective. In key stage 3, we saw many pupils' thinking skills being challenged by references to philosophers like Hobbes, Cicero, Rousseau and Plato. Pupils were able to consider the impact of these philosophers' ideas on a variety of topics. In mathematics, teaching develops pupils' understanding about how to use number well.
- The curriculum is well led, which allows pupils to prepare effectively for the next steps in their education. The subjects offered match pupils' interests and enable them to make good progress. In the past, only a very small proportion of pupils took the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. The proportion has been below the national average, especially for boys. More recently, though, more pupils now take these subjects in Year 10 than in the past. Choices already made by Year 9 pupils show even larger numbers will be involved next year.
- Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer to them. Pupils we spoke to explained how staff work hard to ensure that the activities and clubs on offer cater for everyone.
- You have taken effective action to improve outcomes across all subjects. This has included developing more rigorous systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. In addition, you have ensured that teachers make regular and accurate checks on how well pupils are doing. Progress is particularly strong for younger pupils. As a result, current performance information indicates that pupils are making better progress in the subjects of their own choice in Year 10.
- The quality of learning seen during the inspection in lessons and books in humanities, languages, English and mathematics was good and improving. Pupils are engaged in their learning because of teachers' well-planned lessons and adults' strong relationships with pupils. In the English lessons observed, imaginative

planning and challenging work contributed significantly towards pupils' good progress, particularly in key stage 3.

- Questioning is well targeted and leads to stimulating discussions. In many subjects, pupils know their target levels and how to improve their work, although girls were more assured about this than boys. Pupils also make good progress in mathematics as they are challenged to apply their current knowledge and understanding in problem-solving, for example.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning which also contribute well to their progress. In virtually all lessons seen, we noted that pupils were keen to work hard and make gains in their skills and knowledge. Pupils told us that feedback was important in how they improve their work.
- Progress in science, however, is still not as good as elsewhere, as staffing turbulence since the last inspection has contributed to underperformance at the end of key stage 4 in the previous two years. The new subject leader has well-defined plans for improvement, yet it is too early to judge their impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged improve to match those of their peers with similar starting points, especially in key stage 4
- improvement activities are closely linked to improved outcomes for pupils, which are clearly identified within the school's plans
- The school's website is kept up to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Hugh Betterton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held discussions with you, other school leaders, teachers, governors, and two groups of pupils. We observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to at least 25 lessons, and many of these visits were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. We scrutinised a range of school documentation, including: policies; the school's self-evaluation; the school's improvement plan; safeguarding records; and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. We considered the views expressed in 82 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 64 free-text responses, together with 44 completed by school staff. A small number of questionnaires returned by pupils were taken into account.