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11 June 2018

Mrs Beverley Stanislaus
Headteacher
St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls
155, Tulse Hill
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Dear Mrs Stanislaus

Short inspection of St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2018 with Jacques Szemalikowski, 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 December 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 and your senior leaders are persistent in driving the school forward. You have taken clear actions to respond to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection report. Governors and representatives from the local authority and the diocese speak highly of the changes that you have made in the school since your appointment. You have forged successful partnerships with other schools to further develop your staff and support your pupils.

You recognise that outcomes for pupils in some areas have been too low in the past. Together with leaders, you have put in place effective strategies to improve standards. These actions are now showing clear impact. There is less variation between different subjects and the gap between mathematics and English has been narrowed significantly. Pupils with higher prior attainment, on entry to the school, increasingly make the progress of which they are capable. However, you are not complacent about the needs of these pupils, who remain a priority.

Improvement planning and evaluation are more focused and aligned across all aspects of the school. You and your senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's current performance. All leaders work together effectively to identify any barriers to learning for particular groups of pupils. This results in the sharing of good practice, which raises achievement. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes still remain.

Staff morale is high. Middle Leaders are a strength of the school. They demonstrate both enthusiasm and a focused ambition to do the very best that they can to improve pupils' outcomes. Teachers who are new to the school speak highly of the level of support that they have received. Similarly, teachers who are new to the profession or in training feel that they are making real progress and are delighted with their career choice. The motto of the school, 'Caritate et Disciplina – with Love and Learning', is driven by all staff in a common endeavour to improve pupils' life chances.

The school has a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Pupils value the socially diverse and community-spirited aspects of the school. One of the central reasons for pupils' success is your clear and effective promotion of their well-being. The vast majority of pupils say that they are well supported in their academic and wider needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records of checks on employees, governors and volunteers are carefully recorded and up to date. All staff spoken to during the inspection were aware of their safeguarding duties and clear about how to follow up any concerns or issues. Governors monitor regularly the school's safeguarding systems and understand their statutory responsibilities. The chaplaincy team's work reinforces the effective promotion of safeguarding in line with the school's Christian ethos.

Pupils learn how to keep safe from harm and how to manage risks. For example, workshops in drama explore the sensitive issues of extremism, peer pressure, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. The school is aware of risks in the local area and works effectively in partnership with other agencies to mitigate these. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they are listened to if they raise any concerns. When help is needed, this is provided swiftly and successfully.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to find out how leaders have improved pupils' outcomes in mathematics. This is because published examination results for the past two years showed that too many pupils were performing below their peers nationally. Leaders acknowledge this in their own self-evaluation.
- New leadership in mathematics is showing a positive impact, with all groups of pupils now making stronger progress than previously. Visits to classrooms show that work set and completed is challenging and that pupils show more resilience in learning from their mistakes and improving their work. Where there is stronger teaching, teachers show expertise in addressing misconceptions, but this is inconsistent across the school.
- We next agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils. This is because published examination results for the past two years showed a decline since the previous inspection. Leaders are now reversing this decline. They have appointed a 'pupil

premium champion', who works with all staff to develop strategies to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. There is regular sharing of good practice between teachers and swifter identification of the barriers that these pupils may face. For example, the school day is extended in Years 10 and 11 to allow pupils to develop more independent learning skills.

- Work in books shows progress is similar for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils in all years are making better progress and meeting their target grades. However, some teachers do not always use the most effective strategies to meet the needs of these pupils. For example, activities for this group are not always set at the correct level. Also, governors do not monitor the spending of funding for disadvantaged pupils rigorously enough.
- We then looked at how effective teaching has been in meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able. This was because, historically, these pupils have not performed as well as pupils nationally.
- Progress since the previous inspection has not been as swift as it should have been. Leaders and governors are clear that teachers need to provide activities that challenge higher prior attaining pupils to achieve their potential. This is because teachers' expectations in the past have been too low.
- Leaders and teachers now monitor learning against more challenging targets. They identify and intervene earlier if there are any lapses in a pupil's individual progress. Pupils reported that they now have high aspirations for career choices and say that they feel more challenged. Visits to classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own information about pupils' progress, indicates that recent actions to improve progress are working. However, occasionally, opportunities are missed in classroom discussion to encourage a higher level of pupil response.
- Finally, we considered how effective leadership in the sixth form had been in maintaining students' strong progress across a range of subjects. This was because past performance at A Level had placed the school in the top 20% of schools nationally. However, performance in work-related courses had been less good.
- Inspection evidence shows that provision and outcomes in the sixth form are a strength of the school. Students studying some of the work-related courses are making much better progress than previously. This is because teachers are targeting the needs of individual students much more effectively so that students achieve more successfully.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have provided more information, advice and guidance about the demands and course requirements of different subjects. As a result, students are choosing and completing more appropriate courses and achieving better results.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers:

- continue to share good practice to further improve consistency across the whole school
- provide more clearly defined support or challenge for the disadvantaged and most-able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Maguire
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspection team met with you and your two deputy headteachers. I also met with two school governors and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. We met with a group of middle leaders and teachers who were new to the school, in addition to the recently appointed pupil premium champion. Additional meetings were held with the head of mathematics and the head of sixth form, as well as the designated lead for safeguarding. There were four responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 48 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. We talked to a number of pupils during break and lunchtime and held a discussion with pupils from different year groups. Inspectors visited a range of classrooms, and were sometimes accompanied by senior leaders to observe learning and look at pupils' work. We also examined a further selection of pupils' work. Inspectors evaluated a range of school documentation in relation to safeguarding, teaching, learning and assessment, school improvement planning and evaluation, and personal development, behaviour and well-being. We also looked at key documentation relating to how the school allocates its pupil premium funding. We considered the school's own data on current and projected academic performance.