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Mrs Louise Lee
Principal
The Chalk Hills Academy
Leagrave High Street
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Dear Mrs Lee

Short inspection of The Chalk Hills Academy

Following the visit to the school on 9 May 2018 accompanied by Lizzie Jeanes and Rhona Povey, Ofsted Inspectors, and the return visit on 16 May 2018 by Tim Bristow, HMI and Paul Brooker, HMI to complete the inspection, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Following the last inspection, the academy suffered a decline in the effectiveness of leadership and the quality of education it provided. You took up the post of principal in September 2016. Together with your leadership team, governors and the trust you have established high expectations for behaviour, teaching and achievement. Leaders have made sure that strategies are in place which have led to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum. The consequence of this improvement is that pupils of all ages are making much better progress than last year. For example, disadvantaged pupils have made more rapid progress so that the gap between their outcomes and those of others is negligible. The most able pupils are also making faster progress because of the quality of questioning and the activities they are presented with that stretch them to think more deeply.

At the last inspection, teaching in the sixth form was an area for improvement. Teaching in the sixth form has improved. Consequently, students' achievement at A level has increased. Nevertheless, some students are not making good progress across the courses they study in the sixth form and in science.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Leaders work well with staff

to ensure that the school is typically a calm, orderly and purposeful environment. Usually, pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. Leaders' work to support pupils with challenging behaviour has reaped some notable rewards. However, the level of fixed-term exclusion has risen this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. Pre-recruitment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people are sound.

Regular training helps ensure that staff are clear about their safeguarding duties. Leaders responsible for safeguarding make sure that suitable support is in place for pupils who might be vulnerable or at risk of harm. This includes working effectively with external agencies when needed. Secure procedures are in place for ensuring that pupils who attend alternative provision are kept safe.

The curriculum provides a range of suitable opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe online and in the real world.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 in the last two years has been slower in English and science than in subjects such as mathematics, the humanities and modern foreign languages. The most able pupils' progress was also slower in these subjects in 2017. Leaders have rightly sharpened their focus on improving achievement for these groups of pupils. Work to develop teaching and increase support for pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge is bearing fruit.
- Assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils' progress is better than last year. Work seen in books and observations of learning in English and science indicate that teachers are proficient at identifying the individual barriers to learning and take steps in lessons to ensure that learning for these pupils is of good quality. In science, further work is needed to ensure that recently introduced initiatives lead to consistently effective practice so that the progress pupils make matches progress in other subjects.
- Leaders have a raft of strategies in place to support pupils with challenging behaviour and have had some notable success. For example, there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils being placed in internal exclusion. However, the level of fixed-term exclusion has risen this year. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion is high.
- Leaders have worked effectively to improve teaching in the sixth form. Clearer expectations and regular A-level-specific training for staff have made a difference. In 2017, the average progress students made by the end of their A level was in line with the national figure, having been low in 2016. Pupils with lower starting points made progress significantly above that seen nationally. However, the proportion of most-able students who made good progress remained less than for other groups.
- Leaders have strengthened their approach to teaching English GCSE for the small

number of sixth-form students who did not achieve a good pass in Year 11. Students now benefit from timetabled English classes taught by an experienced teacher. This is making a difference. In the autumn term, nearly half the students who retook their English GCSE achieved a good pass, whereas in the previous year no students improved their grade when they retook the exam.

- Leaders are working effectively to reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who have poor attendance. Leaders keep a close eye on the attendance of these pupils and act quickly, when needed, to ensure that suitable support is in place. Consequently, fewer of these pupils now have a poor attendance record. Leaders recognise the importance of continuing this work to secure further improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress further accelerates in science by checking carefully that all the teaching is of a high standard
- the support provided for pupils with challenging behaviour leads to a significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- teaching in the sixth form continues to improve so that students make consistently strong progress across their study programmes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of The Shared Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Luton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

On 9 May, inspectors met with you and two vice-principals at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas we would focus on during the inspection. During the day, inspectors held further discussions with you and other senior leaders. I met with the chief executive officer of the trust, together with the chair and one other member of the local governing board. Inspectors also met with other leaders and spoke with staff and pupils. They made short visits to lessons, with senior leaders, to look at pupils' learning in English, science and in the sixth form. Members of the inspection team, together with school leaders, scrutinised a selection of pupils' work. Inspectors took account

of 42 staff responses to the Ofsted survey and 160 responses to the pupil survey. They also took account of eight responses by parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including three free-text responses. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, and safeguarding policies and procedures.

On 16 May, two HMI returned to the school to complete the inspection by gathering more evidence about the quality of teaching and learning for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils in science and English. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including those responsible for teaching, learning and outcomes. Documents showing assessment information, the records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the effectiveness of the strategies to develop teaching and the curriculum were examined. A number of lessons were visited where books were examined and pupils were spoken to.