

2 July 2018

Mr Carl Winch  
Headteacher  
Maiden Beech Academy  
Lyme Road  
Crewkerne  
Somerset  
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Dear Mr Carl Winch

### **Short inspection of Maiden Beech Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 2018 with David Herbert, 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 June 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

**There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You lead a school in which pupils feel safe and very well cared for. Parents and pupils themselves acknowledge this. Pupils enjoy learning and work well with each other. Most pupils attend regularly. They enjoy not just lessons but the out-of-class activities which the school provides, before and after school and during the lunchbreak.

The leadership team has maintained several of the school's strengths from the previous inspection. These include the good pupil behaviour and quality of welfare. The school has benefited from stable staffing and increased opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills and confidence. They have done this while adapting to new methods of assessment and a curriculum which focus on developing skills and knowledge in a range of subjects.

Staff are keen to follow your lead and determination in furthering school improvement. This is evident, for example, in recent changes to assessment and monitoring. These help staff to identify more quickly pupils who would benefit from extra support, and then put that support in place. At the time of the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve the standard of writing, especially for lower attainers, and provide more opportunities to write at length in

the various subjects. You have achieved this. Staff were also asked to ensure that pupils responded to their teachers' feedback, so they had a better understanding of how to improve their work. You have worked effectively on this issue, although, as you acknowledge, there are still some inconsistencies.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records meet requirements. This has resulted in a strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel secure. You have ensured that staff fully understand the school's procedures designed to keep pupils safe from all kinds of abuse and threats, for example those posed by child sexual exploitation, misuse of the internet and radicalisation. Staff convinced inspectors that they know how to spot potential issues and deal effectively with any concerns.

Staff and governors have had recent update training in safeguarding issues. A few parents and pupils acknowledge the potential harm caused by bullying, but they do not regard this as a serious issue for the school, and inspectors agree with this. Staff liaise well with external agencies when individual vulnerable pupils need additional support. The school provides strong support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Wherever possible, you get the message across to parents about the importance of child safety. The school keeps appropriate records to show how it deals with any concerns. You ensure that there are the relevant employment checks for staff. When pupils are excluded from school, which happens occasionally, the school gives them appropriate support.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we briefly discussed some key lines of enquiry. My first one was about the progress of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in both key stages 2 and 3. This is because in 2017 the school was classified as coasting, based on the key stage 2 progress outcomes. In 2017 the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below that of other pupils nationally. Not enough pupils made sufficient progress in mathematics from key stage 1. In 2017, attainment in reading, writing, science, grammar, punctuation and spelling was below expectations for many disadvantaged pupils.
- You and your staff have worked hard to reverse the disappointing results and improve more-recent gains in progress. For example, senior leaders have monitored teaching and learning more rigorously. You have given staff good training opportunities in order to increase their skills and knowledge and emphasised the importance of meeting the learning needs of specific pupils. You have developed more sophisticated methods of assessing and tracking pupils' progress. You have encouraged teachers to give pupils more effective feedback.
- These efforts are clearly paying off. School data shows that in the various year

groups, more pupils are now on track to meet or exceed expected levels of attainment and progress. Inspectors saw this improvement for themselves in pupils' work. There is some impressive writing in English and some other subjects such as history and religious studies. The school now prepares more pupils well for the next stage of their education.

- However, as you recognise in the school's own development plan, more work needs to be done in order to improve further the achievement of all groups of pupils and thereby show sustained good progress in all subjects over a period of time.
- The second line of enquiry focused more specifically on the success of leadership and governance in tackling previous issues around achievement since the previous inspection, particularly with regard to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Your development plan focuses on the right priorities to help move the school forwards. The plan, along with the school's self-evaluation, acknowledges that while there are several strengths in pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning, there is still room for greater consistency. This is true, for example, in the degree of challenge in tasks which teachers set for pupils. While there are suitably challenging tasks and strong progress in much of the work, particularly in English and history, there is less challenge or consistency in some other work. You also recognise that while most teachers follow the school's policy on marking and feedback to pupils, a few do so less consistently.
- Some of the leadership's strategies for improvement, for example more systematic monitoring and assessment, are having a positive impact on progress. However, some are at a relatively early stage of development. For example, teachers' use of assessment to plan effectively for the learning needs of particular pupils requires more consistency. This is also the case in the work on further developing pupils' independent learning skills.
- You recognise that while senior leaders play a key role in checking the quality of teaching and learning, it would be desirable to involve middle leaders more in this process as part of consolidating the efforts to ensure sustained progress throughout the school.
- You have begun an effective partnership with a secondary school to share expertise, which has helped to raise expectations of what pupils in Years 7 and 8 can achieve in particular subjects. However, as the school acknowledges, liaison with the upper school to ensure effective continuity and a shared understanding of pupils' standards is still an ongoing issue.
- Governors support the school keenly and are ambitious for it. They fulfil their responsibilities in aspects such as safeguarding and have recently begun initiatives to increase their understanding of pupils' achievement, for example by linking up with subject areas. Governors understand the strengths of the school in pastoral care and support for pupils. They have less understanding of the precise strengths and areas for development in learning, particularly in relation to particular groups of pupils. The school's improvement plan recognises that increasing governors' knowledge and ability to challenge the school and hold leaders accountable is an area to develop. This will strengthen

the school's capacity for further improvement even more.

- The final line of enquiry focused on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Overall attendance continues to be above the national average, but the attendance of these two potentially vulnerable groups has been consistently below this level. Although the number of pupils involved is relatively small, you recognise the importance of this issue. The leadership has not shied away from making difficult decisions in challenging parents as well as providing support for the pupils and families involved. You and your staff make considerable efforts to ensure more regular attendance, for the sake both of these pupils' personal development and of their academic progress. The efforts need to continue.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school further embeds its teaching and learning strategies, such as those designed to enable pupils to develop more independent learning skills, so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can show sustained progress over time
- there is further improvement in leadership and management by:
  - involving middle leaders more in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
  - strengthening governors' ability to play a full part in school improvement by enhancing their knowledge and incisiveness when analysing pupils' progress
- the school continues to work to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

John Laver  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. An inspector visited several lessons for a short period, to observe learning and behaviour, accompanied by one of the senior leadership team. Inspectors looked at the performance of pupils currently in the school. Inspectors met with the SEN coordinator and pupils, and looked at pupils' books. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also met with two parents.

Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, external evaluations of the school, data on pupils' performance, and various documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff questionnaire. The inspection team received several free-text responses from parents.