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Miss Laurie Cornwell
Executive Principal
The Skills Hub
Providence Road
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Dear Miss Cornwell

Short inspection of The Skills Hub

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2018 with Catherine Davies, 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 your school converted to an academy in August 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have shown relentless drive and ambition for the school since it became an academy. You have identified the areas in which the school needed to improve and have set about making the changes necessary. This is starting to have an impact for all pupils. You understand the needs and the challenges of your cohort of pupils. You do not waiver in your effective determination to provide them with the best of life chances. Your aspiration for the pupils is shared by the whole staff. They all agree that the school is better than at the time of the last inspection and that they are proud to work at the school.

As a result of this care, pupils blossom into responsible members of the local community who support this community through, for example, their work with the elderly. Governors and the trust share a highly ambitious and sustainable vision for the future of the school and have taken steps that are showing a life-changing impact for all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Keeping pupils safe is at the heart of the school's work. You and your staff give safeguarding a high priority because you are very mindful of the potential vulnerability of pupils. Staff and governors are trained regularly to identify risks to the pupils and fully understand local context and the effects on the young people. Safeguarding records are kept meticulously. These provide evidence of swift follow-up

and appropriate action taken by leaders as needed. Leaders' strong relationships with outside agencies are exemplary. This multi-agency working means that new and local concerns are identified and reported to the relevant authorities regularly.

Senior leaders ensure that the single central record for pre-recruitment checks meets requirements and is checked at regular intervals. Safeguarding policies and procedures are also reviewed regularly. Case studies show that pupils who have been identified as at risk are supported sensitively and promptly by staff who know pupils and their families well. Pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to focus on three areas. These were how well the curriculum supports pupils in keeping safe and how well pupils make progress. In addition, as the school is a new school with no published data on attendance, we also agreed to look at how this is managed.
- The first key line of enquiry focused on the work that the school does to ensure that the curriculum supports pupils in keeping safe and understanding risk. Visits to classes and discussions with pupils show that personalised learning is having a clear impact on this. The role of the skills coaches, who mentor pupils, has led to strong relationships that have changed pupil attitudes to their own safety. There is a culture of openness where no challenging topic is off limits. Pupils feel confident to raise issues that may cause them anxiety and know that adults, including on-site therapists, will respond and support them.
- Leaders are constantly reviewing the curriculum to make it relevant to local and national events. Pupils spoke with passion about a police presentation about knife crime. They reported that the session helped them understand the risks to them and the impact on families and communities.
- Work produced in RE and English shows that pupils' thinking is mature when considering topics such as gender roles and religious tolerance. They respond well to difficult questions about relationships and really debate issues thoughtfully, acknowledging each other's feelings.
- Links within the curriculum to key safeguarding challenges for the pupils, such as gang-related violence or sexual exploitation, are well understood by all staff. They actively seek training, resources and information to make sure that they are well informed and prepared. Inspection evidence shows that this training has been well used to reduce safeguarding incidents outside of school in the last year.
- The school has a restorative and reflective approach to learning and development and this is exemplified through the conversations and the actions of staff and pupils. Pupils say that this approach has given them hope and that they have no doubt that they are going to be successful. They say that at The Skills Hub they have moved on from the difficulties that they experienced in education in the past.
- You accurately assess pupils on arrival at the school and carry out regular checks on progress every half term. You have recently introduced a new system to measure how well the social and emotional curriculum supports pupils' personal development.

The clear impact is demonstrated of the holistic development of pupils through this newly introduced system and you are now refining it to make even better use of this information to support pupils.

- There are helpful systems to measure academic impact. However, there are still some inconsistencies in how these capture the progress of pupils. Leaders know what they need to do to improve in this area so that they are able to identify group and individual progress in all curriculum areas and have begun this process.
- The school's approach to the curriculum has given pupils skills they can apply outside of school. For example, they now successfully run their own business supplying drinks to local companies. Leaders are now taking steps to ensure that it is fully differentiated for all students in all subjects. Where this differentiation is already fully in place, progress is accelerated. There is less evidence of progress where it is not.
- You have worked hard to ensure that all staff share the aspiration of leaders for pupils' attainment and progress. Where necessary you have taken steps to address any areas of underperformance. As a result, inspection evidence shows that increasing proportions of pupils are meeting their challenging targets.
- The third key line of enquiry looked at the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating attendance. There is an improving picture of attendance year on year, with the school comparing favourably with other schools nationally.
- The school has a full range of strategies to ensure that pupils are in school whenever possible. A strong partnership with parents and external services supports pupils' regular attendance. This partnership is based on mutual understanding and respect. Parents speak of the difference this has made to them and their children.
- All staff are tenacious in their approach to improving attendance and know that the stimulating, broad and personalised curriculum makes pupils want to come school. Pupils report that they value this more even than the rewards that they receive as incentives to attend. The strong links to employability in the curriculum through opportunities to learn about hairdressing, motor mechanics or running their own business enterprise engages pupils and helps them to see the relevance of the learning and the point of attending.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they are able to clearly evidence progress in all curriculum areas through refining an assessment system that then captures fully the academic impact of the work they are doing for individuals and groups

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Matthews
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders and other members of staff. I spoke with the chair of governors and with a representative from the virtual school. My colleague met formally with pupils. We, with senior leaders, visited classrooms across the school and the different sites to gather evidence about our key lines of enquiry and to look at pupils' work. We also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and considered case studies. We considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the use of pupil premium funding, information about pupils' progress and documents related to safeguarding. I also looked at information on the school's website. We analysed the confidential responses to the online inspection surveys from one pupil and 24 members of staff. I also took account of the views of the parent who I spoke to during the inspection.