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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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10 July 2018

Mrs Sara Gorrod
Headteacher
Bucklers Mead Academy
St John's Road
Yeovil
Somerset
BA21 4NH

Dear Mrs Gorrod

Short inspection of Bucklers Mead Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2018 with Andrew Brown, 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 September 2014.

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.**

In September 2017, you made substantial improvements to the leadership and management of the school by restructuring the leadership team. Leaders' responsibilities are clear and align closely with the school's improvement priorities. This makes it easier to hold leaders accountable. You are passionate about the school and provide confident leadership. You are always looking to improve the outcomes for pupils and understand that this is a challenge for the school. In order to improve outcomes, you have sought advice from your school educational partner and this has been beneficial. School directors (governors) are well informed and provide you with support and challenge that has allowed you to implement the changes necessary to improve.

The school has an inclusive ethos and, as a result, admits pupils who have not succeeded elsewhere. The school works hard with these pupils and provides them with the support and opportunities they require. Consequently, they make good progress and are prepared for their lives after school. For pupils who require an individualised curriculum to complete their education, leaders have made successful links with local alternative providers.

Following the last inspection, leaders have improved the quality of teaching by making sure verbal and written feedback to pupils is acted upon purposefully. The most effective teachers are used as role models and coaches who support colleagues in their questioning skills so that pupils develop a deeper understanding

of their subjects. This is beginning to help teachers to provide greater challenge for students.

Safeguarding is effective.

Designated safeguarding staff organise and manage their responsibilities well. They ensure that staff and directors are trained and knowledgeable so that they can spot and deal with any concerns about pupils' welfare or well-being. The advice given to staff is 'anything and everything gets recorded' and then dealt with appropriately. Records are detailed and stored efficiently. The required pre-employment checks for staff are stringent and suitably recorded in line with statutory requirements.

The school has a friendly atmosphere. Pupils feel safe and are cared for well. Pupils reported that they felt safe online and were aware of what to do if they were at risk. Senior leaders are using an online application, now, so that pupils can report incidents anonymously. This has increased pupils' confidence in reporting concerns. Pupils receive suitable guidance on the risks they face, such as the risks of using social media, by means of the school's personal development lessons.

Inspection findings

- Initially, we discussed the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the appropriateness of the curriculum in meeting their needs. For the previous two years, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been weak and so the attainment of these pupils at GCSE has fallen below other pupils nationally. The school's use of additional funding for this group has not had enough impact on their learning. Leadership of this work has a higher profile this year and, consequently, staff recognise its urgency now. As a result, teachers are identifying pupils' needs and their particular barriers to learning. Disadvantaged pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 are making better progress. You are aware of this and continue to focus on the needs of these pupils to diminish the difference in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. A revised curriculum was introduced in September 2017 which is showing impact on pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have more time to reinforce learning and this is beginning to help disadvantaged pupils develop their knowledge and skills.
- Next, we looked at the most able pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science. In 2017, the most able pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was significantly below the national average. Senior leaders identified progress of these pupils as an area for improvement and have appointed a coordinator for high-attaining pupils. Teachers are starting to challenge and stretch pupils' thinking skills but these initiatives are too new to have measurable impact across the school.
- A third key line of enquiry considered how pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported in the school and encouraged to show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well and are making good progress because of their better attitudes to learning.

- We looked at the school's work to promote pupils' behaviour and how pupils are encouraged to show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils commented that attitudes to learning have improved with the new behaviour policy. However, staff told us that some inconsistency remains in the way with which disruptive behaviour is dealt. Some pupils commented that there is a small amount of disruption in lessons, but most staff dealt with incidents effectively.
- Leaders have introduced several initiatives to improve attendance for persistent absentees and these have halted the decline, particularly for those pupils with the poorest attendance. However, overall absence remains too high and you know this is an area on which to continue working to improve pupils' attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the pupil premium strategy is matched precisely to pupils' needs and is evaluated regularly for its impact on improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- the quality of teaching improves so that teachers expect more from the most able pupils and raise their aspirations for them, so that they achieve the highest grades in all subject areas
- the new behaviour policy is embedded to ensure consistent appliance of rewards and sanctions
- attendance continues to improve, particularly rates of persistent absence.

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

Gillian Hickling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. I held a meeting with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I spoke with the school's education partner and alternative providers by telephone.

Inspectors observed learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. We looked at examples of pupils' work. We had discussions with pupils from key stage 3 and key stage 4, and spoke with many other pupils informally. We scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires from 49 staff. We considered 31

responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 19 comments.