

27 September 2018

Mrs Kim Lawrence
Headteacher
Taunton Deane Partnership College
Holway Centre
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Somerset
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Dear Mrs Lawrence

Short inspection of Taunton Deane Partnership College

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 2018 with Andrew Penman, 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 March 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.**

Pupils who attend the Taunton Deane Partnership College face challenges in accessing their learning and pursuing their aspirations. Staff across the six sites work with resilience and commitment to ensure that all is done to support pupils to become 'architects of their futures' as described in the school's vision and values statement. However, the past two years have been very unsettled as there have been significant staff absences, changes in leadership and a reorganisation of responsibilities across the school.

You became headteacher in January 2018 and have set about providing stable, consistent leadership. You have developed a whole-school improvement plan that aims to ensure that the sites work with greater consistency and more closely on agreed priorities. However, the plan is only very recently being used by leaders, including the management committee, to drive improvement. Therefore it is too soon to see the impact of this on outcomes for pupils.

You are working to raise expectations, for example you have introduced new individual timetables aiming to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement to learning. Staff morale is improving but remains fragile as staff adapt and adjust to these considerable changes in expectations.

Providing greater challenge to pupils was an area for development identified at the previous inspection. You have introduced a new assessment system to check the progress that pupils make. 'Programme challenge' tracks pupils' attendance, progress in their social, emotional and mental health issues, academic progress and commitment to learn. Your aim is that this will help leaders to assess how well pupils' needs are being met and to intervene quickly when needed to ensure that pupils reach their full potential. This is recent work and it is too soon to assess the impact that this is having.

Pupils' books show that pupils take pride in their work and their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. However, there is less evidence of challenge being provided to pupils to extend their thinking. Furthermore, targets described in pupils' individual plans are often broad and do not clearly relate to agreed outcomes for pupils. As a result, leaders cannot be sure that pupils make the progress they are capable of.

A further area for improvement at the previous inspection was to ensure that pupils behave well across the different sites. All staff who expressed a view agreed that behaviour is managed well across the school. Staff receive regular training on how to promote positive behaviour. Pupils respect the rules laid down in the code of conduct, which is reinforced by staff in each centre. As a result, there are few disruptions to learning and the numbers of exclusions are now decreasing. However, it is only very recently that disruptive incidents have been recorded methodically to an agreed standard across all sites. This has limited leaders in their ability to check records of incidents to reduce such events taking place.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe and expectations around this are high. Consistently applied rules and boundaries contribute to secure learning environments and help pupils to feel safe. All staff who responded to an online survey agreed that pupils are safe at the school.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a new designated lead for safeguarding who is reviewing processes and systems to ensure that all training is completed in a timely way and that all staff fully understand implications of safeguarding advice and updates.

Recruitment processes are secure and robust. The management committee ensure that they fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. For example, they regularly check recruitment records to ensure that these are complete. In addition, minutes show that the management committee follows up safeguarding audits to ensure that recommendations are completed.

Keeping pupils safe by ensuring that they attend school when they should is a key focus for leaders. New individual timetables show how each part of each day is to be organised with learning activities for each pupil. When pupils do not attend, key workers are responsible for checking up on pupils' safety. This system is not fully embedded and at times responses are too slow, and a pupil's non-attendance remains unchecked for too long. You have very recently introduced a new system to track pupils' attendance in a

more efficient way. You are not yet able to show the difference this new system is making for pupils and attendance for some is too low.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, in addition to exploring the school's response to the recommendations made at the previous inspection, we also looked at two key areas. One was to look at how effectively the curriculum supports pupils' interests and aspirations. The other was to explore how well the management committee strategically drives improvement and holds leaders to account.
- A careful and detailed set of assessments, carried out when pupils arrive, helps to ensure that the curriculum offered matches pupils' learning needs. Staff work closely with the local authority, local schools and a range of external professionals to identify pupils' needs and to provide the right support for pupils and their families. There are many examples of pupils returning to mainstream settings successfully with this support in place.
- A further strength of the school is the varied curriculum that it offers. Pupils engage in activities that interest them, which draws them back to learning and to feeling positive about their achievements. An appropriate range of accredited courses including GCSEs and BTEC National Diplomas are available, which include art, photography and food as well as English, mathematics and science. To engage pupils, staff also use their expertise to supplement learning experiences. Pupils enjoy a range of music and outdoor education, including at one of the school sites which is a dedicated forest school.
- Staff focus on ensuring that pupils are as prepared as possible for their next steps in education, employment or training. Therefore, as well as gaining qualifications, there is a carefully planned personal, social and health curriculum that aims to compensate for the time many pupils have missed in education previously. Staff keep a close eye on pupils' destinations and can report the range of successful apprenticeships being followed by recent leavers.
- The management committee has played a supportive role during the past two turbulent years. During this time, they have tackled some difficult decisions to do with the school budget and stabilising the leadership arrangements. However, they are quick to recognise that they have not received good-quality, detailed information about the school's performance and as a result have not provided the challenge needed to ensure that the school moves forward as quickly as it should.
- Several new members with an appropriate range of skills and experiences have recently joined the committee. They have already accurately identified the key challenges being faced. They have set about organising themselves to lead on different priorities in the improvement plan so that leaders are appropriately challenged to make the improvements needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems and routines, for example to support the recording of behaviour incidents and reporting attendance, are used consistently across all school sites

- the management committee receives the detailed information it needs to hold leaders to account, particularly for pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance
- pupils' individual plans provide achievable steps for improvement that support pupils' needs and promote a celebration of their successes.

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

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Alongside leaders, inspectors looked at learning taking place across the different school sites. Inspectors spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work. The 32 responses to a staff survey were considered. There were too few responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. However, the views expressed by parents in the school's own parental survey information were taken into account.

There were several meetings with leaders. There was also a meeting with members of the management committee and with two representatives from the local authority.

A wide range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, the school development plan and information about the progress that pupils are making, were looked at. Other documents including information about safeguarding arrangements, behaviour and attendance were also taken into account.