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Mary Davies
Chief Executive Officer Maiden Erlegh Trust and Headteacher Maiden Erlegh School
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Dear Miss Davies

Short inspection of Maiden Erlegh School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2018 with Sarah Hubbard, Her Majesty's Inspector, and James Rouse, 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your approach to leadership is characterised by a relentless pursuit of high standards in all areas of school life. Effective leadership ensures that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong. As a result, pupils make excellent progress across all areas of the curriculum and achieve GCSE results which are well above the national averages. This drive is well balanced with a clear commitment to the welfare of pupils and staff. Consequently, there is a very positive learning culture in the school. Pupils from a range of backgrounds thrive.

Staff feel valued and empowered. Those who met with inspectors, and/or completed the staff survey, were remarkably positive about the school. All feel proud to work at the school and that it is well led and managed. The school's successes have been recognised nationally, including through its teaching school status. Leadership capacity has been strengthened to guard against a loss of momentum within the school as its influence in the local area grows.

The work of the inclusion centre is particularly impressive, ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive personalised help to meet a range of complex needs. As a result, many pupils who access this provision make exceptional progress. Many parents and carers wrote to inspectors in appreciation of the support provided for their children, often in difficult circumstances. Pupils value the strong relationships and the support they receive from staff. The great majority who completed our survey reported that they enjoy school, learn well and feel they are listened to. Notably, a very high number of pupils strongly agreed that they are encouraged to respect people from different backgrounds. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is excellent.

The board of trustees provides highly effective support and challenge to school leaders. Trustees know their roles well and strong communication ensures that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. The local advisory board champions hold leaders effectively to account for each aspect of the school's work and ensure that the impact of improvement plans is evaluated rigorously. Significantly, trustees have worked effectively with you to reduce the school's budget deficit in a way that has not jeopardised standards.

Leaders' actions have ensured that all of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. Any areas of relative weakness are quickly identified and actions are taken to address them. For example, leaders are aware that standards in a small number of foundation subjects do not presently match those in other areas and are reviewing why some girls in key stage 3 are not currently making strong progress in English.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. Trustees and the leadership team make sure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. All staff receive appropriate training that ensures that they know how to keep pupils safe. Leaders help parents to be kept well informed of potential risks, for example by sending regular emails and providing comprehensive information on the school website. Parents who responded to the online survey overwhelmingly agreed that their children feel safe and are well cared for in school.

Dedicated and highly skilled pastoral staff work determinedly and sensitively alongside parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being.

Inspection findings

- Pupils currently at the school make strong progress across the curriculum. At this point in the term, Year 11 pupils are working at similar standards to last year's very successful cohort. Disadvantaged pupils, particularly those in key stage 3,

make remarkably good progress. The quality of work produced in science, geography and art is particularly impressive.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong. Teachers use their secure knowledge about their subject and pupils to plan highly effective learning opportunities. They use questioning increasingly well to challenge pupils and probe their understanding. Opportunities for pupils to revisit and consolidate their learning are carefully planned so that their knowledge and understanding develop successfully over time. Staff feel well supported and take part in a range of developmental activities that improve their practice. Leaders use school systems well to check that teaching remains consistently effective.
- The curriculum is carefully considered, well planned and kept under close review. The pathways programme provides appropriate choices for pupils matched to their needs and interests. Opportunities for pupils' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) education are well developed. For example, key stage 3 pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the volunteering projects in the local community that every pupil takes part in. The careers education programme is exemplary, providing pupils with opportunities to work with a wide range of local employers.
- Sixth-form outcomes are typically strong, ensuring that students are very well prepared for their next steps. Leaders' actions have improved the curriculum, teaching standards and guidance for students. As a result, students' progress on A-level courses is now above the national average and attendance and retention rates have improved. Vulnerable and disadvantaged students are particularly well supported through the mentoring programme and close family liaison.
- The taught curriculum in the sixth form is supported by a strong programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Students benefit from a range of leadership opportunities within the school and local community. Almost all sixth-form students take part in relevant work experience placements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the excellent teaching that exists in most areas of the school is firmly embedded throughout, particularly in some option subjects, so that pupils' achievements remain consistently strong.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wokingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My colleagues and I held meetings with you, other leaders, staff and trustees. We spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited several classes to observe learning, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed them at breaktimes and lunchtime. A range of documents were considered, including leaders' self-evaluation, safeguarding, current pupils' progress and the work of trustees. The team took account of responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View (106 responses), and outcomes of the staff survey (92 responses) and pupil survey (292 responses). In addition, the lead inspector took account of 25 letters written by parents which were received on the day of the inspection.