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Mr David Croston
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Dear Mr Croston

Short inspection of Chancellor's School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2018 with Sean Powell, 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.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide purposeful leadership guided by your desire that all pupils achieve well at Chancellor's School. You are supported by a well-respected and effective senior leadership team that ensures that pupils receive a broad and rich quality of education, both inside the classroom and through the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available to them. You and other leaders are rightly proud of the improvements made to the school since you became headteacher. You are committed to supporting all pupils whatever their needs and ensuring that all 'achieve, enjoy, excel'.

Pupils are well behaved and have positive attitudes to learning. They are grateful for the high-quality support they receive from adults in the school. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is high. Pupils say that the school encourages them to be independent. In the Ofsted survey of pupils' views, almost all of those who responded said that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. Parents and carers are also very positive about the school. They say that their children are taught well and make good progress at Chancellor's School.

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have rightly identified the achievement of sixth-form students as a strength of the school. Development plans are focused on the right priorities for improvement, and leaders provide extensive support to colleagues to help them achieve

these. For instance, you have introduced the Chancellor's 'DNA' model to improve teaching. This model identifies the strands crucial to providing high-quality teaching. It is leading to improvements in the quality of learning.

Governors provide you with good support and bring a wealth of expertise to the school. They bring knowledge of education, law, finance and business, which they use to support the school well. They also offer robust accountability to you and other leaders. Governors know the school well and contribute effectively to school development planning. They make sure that they have up-to-date training from the local authority governor support service so that they have the skills to carry out their statutory duties effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and work effectively. An open and supportive culture of safeguarding exists within the school and this is underpinned by strong record-keeping and timely interventions. Leaders are tenacious in following up all necessary checks on staff. Staff take swift action to support pupils at risk. Staff report and follow up concerns with a range of agencies in a timely way. Leaders work exceptionally well with external agencies.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe in a variety of ways, including through assemblies. For example, on the day of the inspection, the theme for assembly was 'be safe'. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow a 'how to thrive' curriculum. This includes topics such as the use of social media, e-safety, equalities, anxiety and body image. Sixth-form students say that they value extended learning days as these allow them to explore issues of personal safety, including gang crime, drugs and relationships. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school, and most parents agree that their children are safe and happy at school.

Inspection findings

- I pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain if the school continues to be good. My first question related to how effectively you and your leaders ensure that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress. This was because in 2017, at the school, these two groups of pupils did not make as much progress from their starting points as pupils did nationally.
- Since the previous inspection you and other leaders have put in place a number of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils. In some classes, disadvantaged pupils' needs are recognised and addressed by teachers well. In these classes, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. However, this is not consistent in all classes. Leaders are aware that not all of their strategies have been successful. As a result, you have chosen new approaches which you believe will be more effective. These include a 'pupil premium first charter' to train and support staff to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress, and 'challenge the gap' staff mentors to personalise support for disadvantaged pupils. Peer mentors work with disadvantaged pupils both inside and outside of lessons.

- It is too early to see the impact of these new methods. Reducing the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally remains a priority.
- The SEN coordinator (SENCo) has a systematic approach to personalising the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The introduction of 'one-page profiles' and training on autism and sight loss for the whole staff has improved teachers' planning. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, they make good progress.
- The second area I looked at was how senior leaders make sure that subject leaders have consistently high expectations. I also wanted to know how subject leaders monitor teaching standards so that pupils make strong progress. This was because in 2017, published assessment information showed that there were some differences in pupils' progress across subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors noted that leaders have a systematic approach to holding subject leaders to account. Subject reviews consider a range of evidence, such as work scrutiny and visits to lessons. You have chosen to involve senior leaders, subject leaders and a governor in this process. These reviews have been refined and are now more focused on specific aspects of assessment information. This makes it easier to analyse the progress of groups. You and other leaders identify strengths and areas for development from these reviews. Middle leaders do now typically have high expectations and monitor the impact of their work well.
- Some inconsistencies remain. There is further work to do to ensure that all middle leaders promote and monitor consistently high standards.
- Finally, I considered the quality of training for middle leaders. I wanted to explore whether it is making a positive difference to the learning experiences of pupils and to the progress they make. You and your senior leaders provide a variety of training for middle leaders. You involve middle leaders in identifying whole-school priorities through a heads of faculty conference. You and your senior leaders then provide training on the important issues for the year ahead. You have set up a professional learning group including key staff. This group looks at topics such as the link between thinking and learning. Information is then shared with other staff to help improve teaching across the school.
- Middle leaders share ideas at meetings and training sessions, which leads to improvements in teaching. Your chosen line management structure provides good support but also challenges them. New middle leaders say that they are well supported. Your pastoral conference and training day on provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities contribute well to professional development. The training you provide is effective in developing leaders across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recently introduced strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils are firmly in place so that these pupils make the progress they should

- middle leaders across the school demonstrate the same high expectations and monitor the impact of their work consistently well.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Pryor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your leaders, other school staff, governors and groups of pupils. I had a phone conversation with a representative from 'Herts for Learning' to talk about their work with the school. Together with some of your leaders, inspectors made visits to a range of classes to observe teaching, look at pupils' books and see pupils at work. I reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record and records of child protection. I also considered the 174 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 111 responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views and the 69 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.