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Mr Neale Pledger
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pledger

Short inspection of Sir Thomas Fremantle School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 2018 with Alison Robb-Webb, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although not new to the school, you and your leadership team are relatively new to your roles. You have begun to identify the priorities to improve the school further as it continues to grow, including expansion of the leadership team to further increase capacity at this level.

Sir Thomas Fremantle School is a welcoming and caring school in which pupils enjoy their learning and feel valued. Pupils benefit from learning within a calm and productive classroom environment. They get to work quickly and maintain their focus, including when the work they are completing is challenging. A high proportion of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. Many parents also commented about the support and encouragement their children receive.

One parent noted: 'I think that the school is fantastic. My children both enjoy attending and they both believe that their school is the best! The teachers are kind and friendly. Their contribution makes the school environment positive and encourage reflective learning. Behaviour amongst pupils is very good.' This was consistent with other inspection evidence.

Outside of the classroom, many pupils participate in the broad range of enrichment opportunities, including cultural, musical and sporting activities, that the school offers. Pupils commented on how these opportunities enable them to develop their

leadership skills.

Teaching continues to be typically good. Some is outstanding. The vast majority of pupils make good progress in English, history and mathematics. Teachers plan lessons well, ensuring that pupils are appropriately challenged, including those who are most able. Where teaching is not as strong, leaders need to monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils, and boys, to ensure that they do not fall behind. Where outcomes for all pupils are not consistently good you have taken actions to address this. You are developing a system for teachers to share the best teaching practice across the school. You are also establishing a partnership with Bucks Learning Trust to support teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. Staff, including those who are about to join the school, receive appropriate training in child protection procedures. They are confident in their understanding of the actions they would need to take if they have any concerns about pupils. The records kept by the designated safeguarding leader demonstrate their secure knowledge and experience, and evidence the prompt actions the school takes when a safeguarding concern arises.

A small number of pupils attend a local provider to access education off-site; however, their absences are not followed up sufficiently rigorously.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning in their lessons, showing respect towards teachers and their peers. Inspectors observed very little disruption to lessons during the inspection. Pupils spoke positively about their experience at the school and reported that pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other.

Pupils also spoke positively about the guidance they have been given about keeping themselves safe, and the support and advice staff offer them. Following on from mental health awareness week, leaders are developing strategies to raise mental health issues and support pupils in how to deal with them. Weekly yoga and mindfulness classes are being run by local volunteers. Where incidents of bullying had taken place pupils were confident that these are dealt with appropriately. Sixth-form students praised the school for the academic and pastoral support they are provided with.

Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive, and they reported that, in their view, the quality of pastoral support and care for pupils is of a very high standard.

Inspection findings

- Our first line of enquiry involved establishing whether boys and the most able disadvantaged pupils were making enough progress by the end of key stage 4. The progress of the most able was identified by the last inspection report. We

looked particularly at English, modern foreign languages, and subjects that are not part of the English Baccalaureate.

- In 2018, GCSE results in modern foreign languages were significantly below the national average for males. Pupils' progress in German was significantly below the national average, owing in part to staffing instability. Pupils made good progress in French. You have already addressed this within the school. Pupils are now able to study GCSE French or Spanish. Pupils also fed back that French teaching was 'engaging and more practical', which motivated them to learn.
- Feedback from the pupils, review of work in pupils' books, and evidence from visits to lessons indicate no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teachers get the best out of the most able pupils in English, history and geography, through effective planning, together with diagnostic feedback and high expectations of all pupils. In the most effective teaching the most able pupils are encouraged to think hard. Some teachers teach them how to research a topic effectively, using different sources of information.
- Over time, teaching, learning and assessment have been effective at meeting the needs of boys and disadvantaged pupils in science, geography, history and mathematics. Overall, leaders, including governors, acknowledge that the outcomes in subjects that are not part of the English Baccalaureate need to be improved. You have begun to develop a system for subject leaders to analyse their departments and identify priorities to improve results. However, leaders, including governors, do not ensure that this process identifies key priorities to address underperformance in some subjects.
- We also agreed to consider how leaders have ensured that the curriculum enables pupils to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions, increasing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Within the stronger subjects, English, science, history and geography, the curriculum has been planned well. It enables pupils to deepen their subject knowledge through carefully planned tasks and activities. Pupils benefit from being able to review prior learning to ensure that their understanding is secure. Across the stronger subjects pupils work maturely in small groups to discuss their work and challenge each other's understanding. Within a Year 7 history lesson, for example, pupils were using their knowledge and understanding to provide well-considered evaluations of castles that they had constructed for homework.
- The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is clearly planned and age-appropriate for the pupils. Pupils spoke highly of how this developed their awareness and understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including e-safety. Leaders need to ensure that the careers programme provides necessary impartial advice and guidance to pupils.
- Our final line of enquiry involved establishing how effectively leaders, including governors, are using monitoring and evaluation systems to drive sustainable improvement. A number of documents, including policies, school self-evaluation, and the pupil premium statement and evaluation, as well as the school's website, have not been reviewed by leaders for a long time. Consequently, leaders, including governors, have not fully ensured that the school fulfils its statutory duties.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems to support strategic leadership and sustain improvements are established and embedded across the school
- outcomes across all subjects, particularly those that are not part of the English Baccalaureate, are as good as other high-performing subjects within the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Kearsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages, art, music, information technology, philosophy and ethics, and health and social care.

Inspectors met with you and the assistant headteacher. I also met with six governors, including the chair. Inspectors met with pupils from Years 10, 12 and 13. Inspectors also talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaktime and lunchtime, about their views and experience at the school.

Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books during lessons. We also looked at a range of school documentation, including leaders' school self-evaluation information, records about the behaviour and attendance of current pupils, and information about safeguarding.

We took account of 77 responses to the staff questionnaire, 79 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 75 written comments by parents, and 150 responses to the pupil questionnaire.