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Mrs Jenny Pitman
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Dear Mrs Pitman

Short inspection of Testwood School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019 with Mark Bagust, 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Together with your senior leadership team, you have continued to foster high expectations and ensure that Testwood School offers a safe and happy environment where pupils are keen to learn. The continued success of the school is based on leaders' knowledge of your pupils, a determination to help them achieve well, and hardworking, dedicated staff. Staff are fully supportive of the direction you set for your school, and they feel proud to work at Testwood School. Parents and carers were keen to share how much they value your passion, commitment and leadership as headteacher. One parent said, 'Mrs Pitman is a fantastic headteacher, so very enthusiastic, easily approachable and a credit to the school.'

Testwood School offers a calm, friendly learning environment. During our visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful, and pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities. We found orderly conduct around the school, and pupils were polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves appeared strong. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school to others, and the number of pupils on the roll at the school is increasing.

You and your leaders have ensured that the school has continued to focus on the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Detailed and accurate

self-evaluation is coupled with appropriate improvement plans, where a clear priority is given to maintaining and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff training and refinements to the school's feedback policy have promoted some improvements to the quality of pupils' writing. However, this new approach to assessment and feedback is not consistently used to challenge the most able pupils sufficiently. In addition, while there have been improvements to pupils' writing in science, there are still inconsistencies in teachers' expectations across the department.

Leaders have strengthened the support for pupils who arrive from primary school with reading levels below age-related expectations. Your approach has helped these pupils rapidly raise their reading ages, making effective use of the Year 7 literacy catch-up premium. New curriculum booklets promote wider reading opportunities and share useful resources with pupils and their parents.

Published GCSE examination results for the last two years show that overall progress scores are in line with the national average across the different subject areas and that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) made stronger progress than their peers last year. While outcomes for disadvantaged pupils dipped last year, leaders' actions have successfully improved the progress for this group this year. Improved systems and training now provide teachers with useful performance information and strategies that they can use to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it both meets the needs of the pupils well and raises their aspirations. You are passionately committed to ensuring a broad range of subjects and rich, relevant learning experiences for all of the pupils. Strengths in the core subjects and humanities have been maintained, and the school has further enhanced its provision in sports and the creative subjects. Leaders' recent restructuring of key stage 4 has allowed the school to broaden the range of subjects on offer and ensure that more pupils study modern foreign languages to GCSE than was the case in the past. Careers education is well planned and valued by the pupils. Older pupils told me that they feel well informed about different colleges and the post-16 courses and opportunities available to them.

You responded quickly when achievement within subjects declined and improved the quality of leadership and teaching where necessary. Middle leaders are knowledgeable and committed to improving teaching, learning and outcomes in their subject areas. They understand their role in monitoring pupils' progress and driving further changes in their departments to address whole-school priorities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has robust safeguarding arrangements, and there are well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. You recently commissioned an external review of safeguarding procedures and have embraced the recommendations to refine practices and procedures still further. Leaders foster a

nurturing environment for pupils and ensure that staff are well informed and respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns. There is a culture of vigilance, and the school's records are carefully maintained and detailed.

You ensure that this aspect of the staff's work is given high priority and meets current requirements. Leaders are proactive and ensure that regular communication between key staff and other agencies enables appropriate support to be made available for vulnerable pupils. The governing body is kept informed about safeguarding matters by senior leaders. Governors are trained in safer recruitment of staff and have engaged in some online training. However, governors' limited experience of external training and their reliance on reports from you restrict the depth of their challenge to the school's systems and procedures.

All staff have current training to a suitable level and know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Strong communication with other providers ensures that pupils who attend elsewhere for part, or all, of the week to complete alternative courses are kept safe and their progress is monitored well.

Bullying and discrimination are rare and pupils report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet. Pupils know who to go to should they have any concerns, and trust staff to resolve them.

Inspection findings

- Pupils typically enter the school with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that is slightly below the national average. Year 7 pupils who join the school with reading levels below those expected for their age make good progress, due to the effective teaching of a systematic reading programme. Reading is promoted well across the school, and useful reading lists are shared with pupils and their parents.
- While published performance information shows that the proportions of pupils attaining at least a grade 4 and a grade 5 in both English and mathematics GCSEs are lower than average, pupils' overall progress scores are in line with the national average. Progress scores for pupils from all starting points have been consistently in line with national averages for the last two years, and pupils with SEND have performed well. However, in the past the progress scores for disadvantaged pupils have been too low.
- The school's internal tracking and pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to non-disadvantaged pupils. Recently, leaders have introduced systems to provide teachers with better performance information about these pupils to support improvements to lesson planning. In addition, a well-planned package of interventions is on offer. Together, these have ensured that disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 4 have made stronger progress than was the case in the past.
- Throughout the school, a range of approaches are in place to help improve disadvantaged pupils' well-being and achievement. There are encouraging signs that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved recently.

- You and your leaders' self-evaluation is accurate, and your improvement plans are suitably detailed, prioritising appropriate areas. However, some of the targets set are not sufficiently challenging to meet the school's aims of achieving outstanding outcomes. Governors need a better understanding of performance information to challenge leaders more effectively to enhance teaching, in order to boost the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- During our visits to lessons, most teachers demonstrated strong subject knowledge, which they used well to ask probing questions and provide engaging learning tasks. Particularly effective examples of this occurred in mathematics, art and dance lessons, where we witnessed good teacher–pupil relationships and high expectations. We saw how these combine to ensure that all pupils are actively engaged and gaining confidence in their learning of key subject-specific knowledge and skills. Across the school, there is a consistency of approach during lessons, which results in calm, orderly classrooms and pupils engaging well with the tasks and activities set.
- Our reviews of pupils' work showed that most feedback by teachers is appropriately detailed and follows the new school policy well. Mostly, teaching takes close account of pupils' starting points and uses effective strategies to meet their needs. However, in a minority of lessons across the subjects, and particularly in science, there is some variation in teachers' expectations and the impact of their assessment. Sometimes pupils, particularly the most able, are not fully challenged, and this hinders them in making the progress of which they are capable.
- The school's careers information and guidance programme is effective in ensuring that pupils in key stage 4 have a good understanding of the opportunities available to them when they leave school, including apprenticeships. Pupils are supported through a range of activities in enrichment days, tutor time and personal development learning lessons, and through personal interviews with senior staff and governors.
- In the past, pupils' overall attendance has been below the national average. This is changing. Attendance overall this year is in line with the national average. The attendance of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, has improved. This is a result of your whole-school promotion of good attendance. Leaders have ensured that close monitoring, weekly attendance leagues, rewards systems and attendance agreements are all used to good effect.
- The school's attendance officer has applied her in-depth knowledge of the local community to great effect. Case studies demonstrate how she has been particularly effective in her liaison between parents and relevant external agencies. This has led to improvements to the attendance and punctuality of pupils who have had high levels of persistent absence in the past.
- Clear behaviour policies share high expectations. Leaders, together with pastoral staff, ensure that there is a consistency of approach across the school. Exclusions have fallen this year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make consistently strong use of the school's new assessment and feedback systems across all subjects, particularly in science
- more consistently challenging learning activities are made available for the most able pupils across the curriculum
- governors use a better understanding of performance information more sharply to evaluate policies and systems, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, and the impact of initiatives to improve teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, your deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. Together with senior leaders, we made short visits to classes across the school and to an assembly. We considered 50 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey. We took careful account of 168 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 136 free-text comments. We met with a small group of pupils, spoke informally to pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and reviewed 122 responses by pupils to Ofsted's online survey. We looked at documents relating to the school's work, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, policies and safeguarding records.