

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Jeremy Garner
Headteacher
de Stafford School
Burntwood Lane
Caterham
Surrey
CR3 5YX

Dear Mr Garner

Short inspection of de Stafford School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 October 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the school opened as a converter academy in December 2016, you have worked hard to improve teaching, behaviour and pupils' outcomes. You maintain a good standard of education for your pupils and ensure that the school is increasingly popular with local parents. Almost all parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, believe that the school is well led and managed and would recommend the school to others. One parent wrote, 'The teachers, headteacher and deputy head teacher are all enthusiastic, positive and engaging.' Similarly, staff share your ambitious vision for the school. Nearly all staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire reported that the school was well led and managed.

You have been ably supported in school improvement by GLF Schools trust. Trust leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work closely with you and governors to ensure that there is a joint approach to school improvement. The trust provides high-quality training. Subject experts, employed by the trust, work closely with teachers and subject leaders. For example, staff attend 'MAT Mondays' where they work with colleagues from the trust's other schools. Teachers told inspectors that these events provide valuable opportunities to share expertise, resources and ideas. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire believe that leaders use training to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' achievement so that

outcomes are outstanding and to ensure that all teaching reflects the best practice in the school. Since the previous inspection, pupils' rates of progress have fluctuated. You were disappointed with the school's published national measures of pupils' progress in 2018. Overall, Year 11 pupils' progress was below average. However, you have been steadfast in ensuring that support for teachers has been strengthened since the last inspection. Consequently, teaching is improving, and current pupils make strong progress.

Significant recruitment challenges have led to variability in the quality of teaching in the past, particularly in mathematics. Nevertheless, you have worked with trust leaders to ensure that you successfully recruit teachers. Staffing is now more stable. Leaders have ensured that new teachers are well trained so that they use the school's high standards and policies from the time they start effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that checks on the suitability of staff are appropriate and well managed. The school's safeguarding culture is strong. All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and pupils feel safe. Staff have learned how to use the school's new safeguarding systems quickly. Consequently, any concerns that staff have about pupils are reported and acted on quickly by leaders.

Leaders have an in-depth knowledge of local safeguarding issues. They arrange appropriate up-to-date training for staff so that staff are aware of how to best deal with any issues that pupils face. Leaders work well with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. A range of external agencies are invited into school to provide workshops and assemblies for pupils. For example, the Metropolitan police recently facilitated an assembly about the dangers of knife crime.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on the following: boys' progress; pupils' progress in mathematics and science; how well leaders have improved attendance and reduced exclusions; and how well governors hold leaders to account.
- Ensuring that boys make better progress is a key objective in your plans for school improvement. Teachers provide sharply focused support to boys, particularly in Year 11. Leaders have also focused strategies to improve the attendance of this group. Consequently, boys' progress is now increasingly strong, particularly in mathematics. While boys' attendance is still below the national average, it is improving now. Leaders are resolute in continuing the effective work in this area.
- Teaching in science is increasingly effective. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils behave well and respond positively to teachers' instructions. Teachers encourage pupils to work together during lessons. Pupils help each other and readily discuss how to complete tasks and develop their understanding. As a result, pupils learn well across a range of subjects.
- Teachers plan well-organised activities. They consistently use the school's assessment policy to understand which pupils need help in catching up. As a result, activities are increasingly challenging.

- Pupils use teachers' insightful feedback to rectify mistakes and extend their learning. Time is set aside in lessons for pupils to reflect on their own performance in subjects and to plan actions that will help them reach their ambitious targets.
- Leaders have resolutely planned strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Rightly, you have focused these strategies on disadvantaged pupils. This group attends less well than other pupils, and you have ensured that communication with families and the work of the attendance officer have led to improvements in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils over the past year. However, current pupils, and particularly those who are disadvantaged, still do not attend school regularly enough.
- Governors have an astute understanding of their roles. They are knowledgeable, particularly regarding local issues, and committed to school improvement. Governors work well with school and trust leaders. This has created a collegiate approach to school improvement, where governors, leaders and trust leaders decide together on the school's future direction and the ways to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Governors have monitored the school's plans for improvement closely. They regularly challenge leaders about the effectiveness of their actions, particularly relating to the improvement of pupils' outcomes. Governors and leaders recognise that further improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' progress are needed. All leaders are committed to this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and pupils' progress improve further, particularly in mathematics and science
- levels of attendance improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, I met with you and discussed your view of the strengths and

weaknesses of the school. We agreed on the areas of focus for this inspection, and on the activities that we would participate in during the day.

Inspectors visited a reading support group during form time and lessons across the school with you and senior leaders, where we spoke to a wide range of pupils and looked at their work. We held a meeting with key stage 4 pupils and considered 52 pupils' responses to Ofsted's online survey. We observed behaviour in and around school. We took account of 181 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 181 free-text comments. We also considered 51 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey. I met with governors, the chief executive officer and the secondary schools' performance director of the multi-academy trust. An inspector met with subject leaders. We considered a range of documentation, including safeguarding policies, the school's self-evaluation, plans for school improvement, attendance and behaviour information, and information about pupils' progress.