

4 March 2019

Mr Michael Mullins
Headteacher
Stretford Grammar School
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Dear Mr Mullins

Short inspection of Stretford Grammar School

Following my visit to the school on 19 February 2019 with Elizabeth Haddock, 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear vision for the school and want to develop the whole child. You are very well supported by your deputy headteacher, staff and governors. They share your high aspirations for pupils at the school. Staff feel that the school is well led and managed. They recognise that you and your senior leaders are supportive and considerate of their well-being. The impact of your team's efforts is evident in the strong improvement in outcomes in GCSE examinations over time. For example, in 2018, Year 11 pupils made progress that was well above the national average. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make very strong progress in a broad range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.

The school is welcoming and inclusive, with a strong sense of community. Pupils report that they enjoy coming to the school. Inspectors found pupils to be polite, confident and articulate. They behave very well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work well with each other, regardless of ethnicity or background. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils socialise sensibly during break and lunchtimes and arrive at lessons on time.

Stretford Grammar School is a hive of activity. Pupils relish the wide array of sports, trips and visits which are on offer. They also benefit from a range of enrichment activities, such as the debating society and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Leaders place great emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about a range of faiths and cultures. They

demonstrate a good understanding of British values, including tolerance and respect for diversity. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills in roles such as 'school parliament' representatives, house captains and prefects.

The great majority of parents and carers who responded to the free-text service and Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, are very positive about the school. Parents said that staff are approachable and they value the information that they receive about their children's progress. One parent wrote: 'The school is a caring and supportive environment.' Another parent said: 'My child enjoys going to school. I am very happy with the progress my child is making.' The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

Governors have a broad range of expertise and experience that enables them to fulfil their roles effectively. They want the best for pupils. One commented: 'We want pupils to achieve their full potential and be outstanding citizens.' Governors offer a high level of challenge and support to senior and middle leaders. They know the school very well.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to improve the quality of teaching further. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to check pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Most teachers are making better use of the information available to them to plan activities which challenge pupils, including the most able. This has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4. For example, in the past three years, the progress of middle-ability and higher-ability pupils was significantly above average.

You were also asked to improve achievement in the sixth form. You and your team introduced a range of strategies which resulted in students making better progress across the curriculum in 2016. Year 13 students made very strong progress in 2017. However, overall progress dipped to below average in 2018. You have carefully analysed the reasons for this. You and your leaders are taking action to improve outcomes and have achieved some success. However, there is more to do to ensure that the rate of progress improves across all subjects, particularly those with large numbers of students.

You recognise that you could do more to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend school more frequently and that leaders monitor and evaluate the progress they make more carefully so that they achieve the highest standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Leaders ensure that employment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough. Staff have completed training in safeguarding. They receive frequent updates and all have read the most recent government guidelines. Staff know the signs to look out for that might indicate that a pupil is at

risk of harm. They know what to do if they have a concern about safeguarding. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to meet the needs of pupils and keep them safe. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner.

Pupils say that they feel safe in the school. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and social media. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. This is confirmed by school records. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View agreed that their children are safe and well looked after. Staff say that the school is a safe place to be.

Inspection findings

- My main line of enquiry for this inspection related to achievement in the sixth form. This had been an area for improvement since the previous inspection. In 2018, overall progress in A-level subjects was significantly below the national average. You and your team have taken a range of actions to improve students' outcomes. For example, subject leaders have revised schemes of work to ensure that sixth formers are better prepared for the demands of studying A-level subjects. You have developed useful links with other schools, and all sixth-form teachers carry out evidence-based research. Leaders have sharpened the systems to check students' progress. Teachers and subject leaders check students' work regularly to ensure that they are up to date and those who are falling behind are quickly identified and have access to additional support sessions.
- Leaders have tightened up entry requirements for A-level options and improved careers information, education, advice and guidance. As a result, a larger proportion of students are continuing with their programmes of study, through the sixth form. Students appreciate the support that they receive with their subjects and for university applications. Almost all students progress to education, employment or training. Inspection evidence shows that current students are making better progress than in the past. However, there are still some differences in the rate of progress in different subjects.
- The second focus for the inspection related to attendance. Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. Leaders use a range of strategies to follow up absences and reward good attendance. However, persistent absence for a small minority of pupils with SEND was above the national average in 2017/18. Leaders are working hard to improve this. Rates of attendance for these pupils are improving, but these are not yet in line with national averages.
- A further line of enquiry related to the progress of pupils with SEND. Leaders had already established that these pupils did not make as much progress as their peers in some subjects in 2018. The leadership of this area has been strengthened recently. Leaders provide training for teachers and ensure that they regularly receive information about pupils' needs. Assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work show that, overall, these pupils are making better

progress than in the past. However, information about the progress of pupils with SEND is not evaluated carefully enough to enable them to reach higher standards from their individual starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue their efforts to increase the rate of progress in the sixth form, particularly by reducing variability in achievement between subjects
- the attendance of the small minority of pupils with SEND improves further
- they use the information that they hold about the progress of pupils with SEND more carefully to enable these pupils to make stronger progress from their individual starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, we met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching and support staff. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair. I held a telephone conversation with two representatives of the local authority. We carried out observations of learning and looked at pupils' and students' work. Some of these activities were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. We spoke informally with pupils and students during breaktime and lunchtime. I met with a group of sixth-form students. We took account of 110 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 97 free-text responses. We also considered the views of 36 staff and 332 pupils.

We looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress. We also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.