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Mr Richard Hey  
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Dear Mr Hey

### **Short inspection of Westwood College**

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 2019 with Huw Bishop, 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 converted to become an academy and the second short inspection since your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Westwood College is a welcoming, friendly school. Pupils and sixth-form students are happy here because they say that they are treated as adults and feel their voices are heard. They develop a strong sense of equality and fairness.

The school's impressive building is situated in generous, attractive grounds. You took up the post of headteacher shortly after the school joined the Talentum multi-academy trust in 2016. The trust presents a number of opportunities for schools to collaborate. For example, a joint sixth form operates between your school and the other high school in the trust. Teachers benefit from working with other teachers in the trust on joint training days and leadership development courses. There is room for the school to gain greater benefit from the opportunities the trust could provide.

Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained at key stage 4. Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 has been broadly in line with that seen nationally for the past three years. Together with other leaders, you have ensured that the quality of teaching pupils receive is consistently effective, despite recent staff changes. Subject leaders who spoke to inspectors during the inspection have a clear understanding of the strengths of their departments, as well as the areas for development. Teachers receive effective support to improve their practice where necessary.

Students in the sixth form achieve standards which are broadly in line with those seen nationally for students with similar starting points. Teaching is engaging and creative in many subject areas, which motivates most students to work hard and achieve well. The quality of students' work in many cases is extremely high. Displays of students' art and design work demonstrate the high standards they achieve. In 2018, a large proportion of students went on to university when they left the sixth form, including Oxford and Cambridge.

Leaders have addressed most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection effectively. Reading now has a much higher profile across the school. The school's literacy policy makes a clear commitment to improve pupils' reading so that they are better able to cope with the language demands of the new GCSE examinations. Each subject department has its own action plan in place to address this. Pupils have access to a selection of books in their tutor group, which they can read every day during tutor periods. This encourages pupils to read widely and often. Pupils' attendance has started to improve recently and, since the beginning of this academic year, has been more in line with the national average. Improving attendance remains a focus for improvement for the school and was explored further during this inspection by inspectors. Leaders have refined the school's action plans. However, governors are not able to gauge the impact of leaders' actions effectively enough because the success criteria in the school development plan are not sufficiently specific and measurable. As a result, when leaders review progress against the school development plan, they focus on checking that the actions have been taken rather than evaluating the impact of their work.

During the inspection we agreed that, in some aspects of the school's work, there are inconsistencies. For example, some staff apply the school's policies consistently. However, this is not the case for all. Many teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and insist on a high standard of work and presentation in pupils' books. However, this is not consistently the case. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. They appreciate the mutual respect that exists between staff and pupils. They say that all pupils are made to feel welcome. Students embrace diversity and value the school's inclusive nature. Members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey were very positive about working at the school. They say that they are proud to work here and feel well supported by leaders.

Parents' responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text responses, were more mixed. Most parents value the way staff respond to pupils' needs. They are happy with the progress their sons and daughters are making. However, a small number of parents expressed concerns about pupils' safety. During the inspection visit, you explained the measures you have taken to ensure that pupils are safe. Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that pupils are not kept safe. Pupils spoken to during inspection said that they feel safe and they feel there is always a member of staff they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Members of the local governing body know the school well because many of them have long associations with the school. They visit the school often and receive regular updates about pupils' performance from senior leaders and subject leaders. Minutes of local governing body meetings demonstrate evidence of some challenge to leaders. Governors are ambitious for the school to improve further. For example, they are keen to see the number of students in the sixth form increase.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recruitment checks are recorded and kept up to date rigorously. Staff receive regular training and updates to keep safeguarding at the forefront of their day-to-day work with students. There are appropriate risk assessments in place for trips, site security and for each curriculum subject. Pupils and students in the sixth form say that they feel safe in school. In lessons and assemblies, pupils learn how to stay safe outside school and online.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders are addressing: the comparatively weaker performance in mathematics at GCSE in 2018 compared with other subjects; the low rate of attendance of some pupils; the apparent variability in students' progress in certain subjects at A level in 2018; and curriculum provision. In particular, we explored how leaders were ensuring that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improved.
- At key stage 4 in 2018, pupils' progress improved overall and particularly for English, but pupils' progress in mathematics declined slightly. Leaders' analysis suggests that this dip was due partly to the circumstances of some individual pupils, but they are not complacent. Leaders have put in place appropriate actions and additional support to ensure that outcomes in mathematics improve this year. These actions are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are having the desired impact. In addition, teachers receive effective support to improve their skills. Leaders are now setting more ambitious targets. As a result of this robust response, current pupils are making stronger progress this year compared to last year and a higher proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the school's expectations in mathematics than was the case last year.
- Teachers have identified that the more challenging language demands of the new GCSE examination specifications, across a range of subjects, present difficulties for some pupils. In response to this, teachers now support pupils more effectively to understand key vocabulary in their subjects, thus removing this additional barrier to success. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary with increasing confidence. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how this helps them to learn.
- Leaders have put in place a range of actions to improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and other subjects. In 2018, the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils improved slightly to be closer to the national averages for all pupils. The school's most recent assessment information indicates that, for current disadvantaged pupils, a higher proportion

are on track to achieve the school's expectations in mathematics. This was supported by work seen in pupils' books.

- Leaders have put in place more robust strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Pastoral support has been strengthened for the significant number of individual pupils who face challenges in attending school regularly. Many parents who responded to Parent View expressed their gratitude for this support. Leaders shared with inspectors several case studies demonstrating success in improving attendance. A dedicated member of staff monitors attendance closely. Leaders and governors discourage parents from taking holidays in term time. Where absence is unauthorised, leaders work with local authority attendance officers to pursue the case and some parents have received fines. As a result, attendance overall is starting to improve. Although disadvantaged pupils' attendance needs to improve further, it is marginally better and is now closer to the national average.
- In the sixth form, attainment for students in most A-level subjects is in line with or above that seen nationally for students with similar starting points. In 2018, outcomes in some subjects improved on the previous year. However, in other subjects, outcomes declined.
- Leaders have implemented a number of initiatives to secure further improvements. Where teaching needs to improve, leaders provide effective support. A comprehensive monitoring programme is now in place. Inspectors observed sixth-form students in lessons benefiting from teachers' strong subject knowledge and skilful questioning. Students were actively engaged in challenging tasks and discussions.
- Some students find it hard to cope with the demands of certain subjects at A level, for example psychology, where those with weaker mathematical skills struggle. Leaders are now checking students' progress regularly to ensure that students receive extra support quickly when they are in danger of falling behind. Leaders have also reviewed the advice and guidance given to pupils in key stage 4 about the demands of A-level courses to ensure that pupils choose the most appropriate courses for them.
- Staying at school to join the sixth form is a popular choice for many pupils. A high proportion of students leaving the sixth form in 2018 went on to university courses. The majority of subjects currently offered are academic A-level courses. However, A levels do not suit the needs of all pupils and leaders are keen to ensure that the post-16 offer is accessible for everyone. There is, therefore, a need to provide a broader range of alternative qualifications to suit the needs of all students.
- The curriculum at key stage 4 is broad and balanced. Ambition is built into the curriculum as pupils have an open choice of GCSE subjects and no subjects are restricted. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils study EBacc subjects than is typical in other schools nationally. This is because a high number of pupils opt to study one of the three modern foreign languages offered, despite the fact that many pupils may have had limited exposure to modern foreign languages previously. This reflects leaders' and governors' commitment to fair and equitable access to the full range of courses for all pupils, regardless of their prior attainment. The curriculum offer is well thought out and is explicitly designed to

address the needs of individual pupils.

- Disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 are beginning to make better progress, although leaders recognise that further improvement is needed. Disadvantaged pupils who need additional support benefit from one-to-one tuition, free revision guides and access to online resources.

### **Next steps for the school**

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that attainment and progress continue to improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that:
  - attendance is improved further
  - all staff have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - all staff implement the school's policies and procedures consistently
  - the impact of leaders' actions is evaluated more effectively
  - the curriculum offer in the sixth form is reviewed to ensure that the range of qualifications better addresses the increasingly diverse needs of students.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Before the inspection, I reviewed the school's published data and website. At the start of the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I met with other leaders, including subject leaders, to discuss the curriculum, leadership development and their work to improve the quality of teaching. The team inspector met with other leaders to discuss safeguarding, attendance, exclusions and leadership of the sixth form. I met with the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Talenum multi-academy trust. I reviewed documents including the minutes of local governing body meetings and senior leadership team meetings. I visited lessons jointly with you and the team inspector visited lessons in the sixth form with other leaders. I took account of 53 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as 34 free-text responses. I also considered 38 responses to the staff survey and 107 responses to the online pupil survey. Both myself and the team inspector spoke to pupils at break and lunchtime and in lessons. Inspectors spoke to staff informally about their

understanding of safeguarding and the training they had received. Inspectors examined the school's record of recruitment checks, as well as a selection of safeguarding case files and behaviour records.