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Mr Robert Shadbolt
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Shadbolt

Short inspection of Wood Green School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Mary Davies, 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 your predecessor 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 school became an academy in February 2017. You have developed a team of leaders who share your values and provide a good quality of education for your pupils. You have created a calm, purposeful environment that staff, pupils and visitors enjoy. You effectively balance your drive to improve standards with the well-being of staff and pupils. Consequently, staff morale is strong. Staff who completed the online survey are proud to work at the school and believe that leaders work hard to ensure that the school has a motivated and respected staff.

Pupils are welcoming and friendly. In meetings with inspectors they behaved maturely and were keen to give us their views. They enjoy learning and feel that the teachers help them to do their best. Pupils feel sufficiently challenged in their lessons. In the majority of lessons, pupils are attentive, collaborate well with their peers and complete work of a good standard. Pupils appreciate the additional opportunities provided to help them with aspects of their work that they find more difficult. In addition, they enjoy participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer as part of the school's intent for pupils to become 'well-rounded, caring citizens'.

You are successfully gaining the confidence of the local community. The group of pupils that will be joining the school in Year 7 in September will be the largest cohort you have welcomed in many years. The sixth form is also growing in the number of students choosing to remain at Wood Green, allowing you to expand the

range of courses offered. The many positive comments that parents reported to us are typically summarised as: 'Wood Green School continues to serve its student community well. We are lucky to have this school for our community. The staff are well respected by pupils and parents and go above and beyond to ensure our children receive first-class education.'

You have fostered strong relationships with a wide range of organisations, including the schools in the multi-academy trust and the local college of further education. Headteachers of schools across the trust robustly challenge one another and share good practice. You have wisely secured the support of the college to provide courses to meet the needs of some of your most vulnerable pupils and those who are best suited to learning through vocational courses.

Leaders and governors use effective processes to evaluate the strengths of the school and accurately identify the areas that need to improve. Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve the progress of pupils who fall behind and to increase the rate of attendance of some groups of pupils. Consequently, pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are now making better progress than previously. You have strengthened the leadership team so that there is now greater capacity than was the case to work with pupils and families of pupils who do not attend school regularly. Through leaders' determination, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved so that it is closer to the national average for secondary schools. However, the persistent absence of some boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND continues to be a priority and challenge for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained and monitor pupils' welfare closely. All members of staff understand how to use the confidential system to report concerns. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You regularly invite external agencies to audit the suitability and rigour of your safeguarding practices. Before appointing staff, leaders carry out all the required checks and records are meticulously kept. Governors are clear about their responsibilities for safeguarding and bring valuable experience that they use to hold leaders to account.

Leaders have expanded the team of staff who interact sensitively with vulnerable pupils, their parents and external agencies. Pupils told us that they feel safe and parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their sons and daughters are safe in school. Pupils have confidence in their pastoral leaders' support and feel that they can talk to their tutors if they have concerns. Leaders' effective communication with staff at Abingdon and Witney College of Further Education ensures that pupils who study courses there remain safe.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in carefully planned lessons and assemblies. As a result, pupils are aware of risks to their health and safety. Pupils

described the personal development programme as being 'useful for now and for adult life'. Leaders are committed to the well-being of pupils and staff and have created a framework of support with a major private health provider, giving all pupils a well-being coach.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we agreed to consider how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils to prepare them for the next steps in their education or employment and adult life.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and introduced significant changes in September 2018, with the intention of encouraging better engagement of pupils and consequently improving attendance. This has included increasing the challenge for the most able pupils, sourcing appropriate courses for vulnerable pupils and adding vocational options for pupils and sixth-form students to provide them with worthwhile progression routes.
- The flexibilities that leaders have introduced for vulnerable pupils, including work experience, have had a very positive impact on pupils' attendance. Leaders' careful crafting of the timetable enables a group of pupils in Year 10 to follow part-time vocational courses at college without missing out on GCSE examination courses at school. The provision of vocational courses has helped to retain some sixth-form students in education.
- Leaders have revised the broad and balanced curriculum in key stage 3 that underpins pupils' secure knowledge, understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils who join the school in Year 7 needing additional help work intensely to catch up. Most-able pupils are given choices to gain additional skills by learning, for example, philosophy and public speaking.
- We also looked at how effectively leaders were targeting the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND to improve their progress. Governors and leaders consider this to be a high priority for improvement and have a clear plan to focus spending on strategies that have high impact.
- Pupils who learn mostly in the resource unit and others who have SEND are doing well because of the support of well-trained and caring adults. When they are learning alongside other pupils, those with education, health and care plans are able to tackle the same tasks as their peers and produce work of a similar standard. In a textiles lesson, for example, pupils were able to use tools and equipment safely and skilfully with close supervision and use colour and texture imaginatively.
- Some teachers expertly adapt their planning to take account of pupils' specific needs. Consequently, in some lessons, there was no demonstrable difference in the standard of the work of pupils with SEND when compared to that of other pupils.
- Leaders and most teachers recognise disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning and help them to overcome their difficulties. Consequently, in most subjects, disadvantaged pupils are able to reach the same standards as other pupils from

similar starting points. However, their learning is sometimes hindered by poor presentation and organisation. Disadvantaged pupils often have work missing from their books or it is incomplete, and teachers are not consistently noticing this quickly enough. In some subjects, they are unable to build on prior learning because teachers are not insisting that they catch up with missed or incomplete work.

- The third line of enquiry looked at pupils' attendance and persistent absence rates. Although there have been some significant improvements made by some groups since a new senior leader has been meticulously monitoring attendance, leaders are not complacent. Leaders are unremittingly seeking and deploying effective strategies to use with groups of pupils, or individual pupils and their families.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and persistent absence is reducing as a result of leaders' diligence. Governors and staff are determined for their work to have a positive impact on the pupils who need to attend school regularly, specifically pupils with SEND or who are disadvantaged, and particularly boys.
- Finally, we looked at teaching in the sixth form and how students who gained good GCSE examination grades are being led to achieve the highest grades in their A Level and equivalent courses.
- Teachers have high expectations of sixth-form students. Most teachers have a clear understanding of what is required for the students to reach the highest grades and they plan lessons at an appropriate level. Students enjoy the wide range of challenging activities in lessons and the degree of difficulty that they present.
- The strong relationships between teachers and students allow for challenging academic conversations in some subjects. Pupils appreciate the 'enormous' amount of support that they can access beyond their lessons, including 'clinics' after school and online access to resources.
- Leaders have strengthened the systems for monitoring and reviewing students' progress in the sixth form. However, teachers do not provide consistent challenge to students in every area of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action continues to be taken to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, particularly that of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND
- teachers consistently check pupils' books and, where they find work to be missing or incomplete, support and challenge the pupils to help them catch up
- all teachers focus on challenging sixth-form students in lessons to enable them to reach the highest grades.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the senior executive leader of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and

the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karen Roche
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held meetings with you, other school leaders, teachers, the vice-chair of the local governing body and groups of pupils in Year 8 and Year 11 and students in the sixth form. I also had telephone conversations with the senior executive leader of the multi-academy trust and the programme leader at Abingdon and Witney College of Further Education. We observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to lessons. All of these were conducted jointly with senior members of staff. We scrutinised a wide range of the school's documentation, including the single central register, and checked for evidence of safer recruitment. We looked at the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan; safeguarding; child-protection records; and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. We reviewed the most recent safeguarding audit that had been conducted by the local authority. We considered the views expressed in 110 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 110 free-text comments by parents, together with 157 questionnaires returned by pupils and 37 staff.