

3 July 2019

Mr Iain Veitch
Headteacher
Park View School
Church Chare
Chester-le-Street
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DH3 3QA

Dear Mr Veitch

Short inspection of Park View School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019 with Angela White and Tricia Stevens, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2012.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have developed a clear vision for your school based around core values, such as respect, compassion and kindness, that are shared and promoted effectively by all leaders, including governors. You ensure that all your staff believe in your inclusive ethos. Staff consider carefully how they can build communities in their classrooms that increase pupils' confidence, such as to express their views and ask relevant questions in lessons. Nearly all pupils said that they are proud to be a part of the school community and that they feel supported to achieve their very best. The views I collected from parents support this. Almost all agree that their children are happy and safe at your school.

You, your leadership team and staff are rightfully proud of your pupils and of their attitudes towards learning and towards each other. Pupils showed excellent attitudes to learning in all lessons that inspectors observed.

The sixth form is a school strength. As a result of effective leadership and good teaching, students make good progress over time. The sixth-form leader has an ambitious vision and high expectations. Strong and efficient processes are in place to ensure that all students are effectively assessed, monitored and supported.

At the time of the previous short inspection in November 2015, leaders and governors were asked to make some improvements. You have worked well to address these overall. For example, pupils now have a good understanding of the differences between bullying and friendship issues. You now carefully track the achievement of children looked after. Dedicated counsellors work alongside pastoral leaders to support the well-being of these pupils effectively. You work closely with the local authority to ensure that they can achieve well. You were also asked to improve the rigour in the teaching in Years 7 and 8 so that pupils are better prepared for key stage 4. While you have worked to achieve this, your efforts have not had the desired effect in all subjects. This is because the quality of teaching is currently variable.

You have, rightly, recognised that in 2017 and 2018, pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, in Year 11 did not make good progress from their starting points in some subjects, including in English and mathematics. You are already working to address this. Curriculum revisions have been made so that pupils build their knowledge and understanding more effectively over time across the subjects. However, not all staff yet adhere to these revised curriculum approaches and the quality of teaching between subjects remains variable. As a result, some pupils are not making consistently good progress. Leaders are not clear enough about this variability or about the impact the actions they are taking are having on speeding up pupils' progress. Addressing this is now an important next step.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding is effective through clear processes and procedures that staff and governors understand. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Leaders know their pupils and communities well, which results in pupils feeling safe and happy. Pupils are confident that staff will deal effectively with any problems they might have.

Leaders deal swiftly and effectively with any incidents and concerns to make sure they do not lead to a pupil being endangered. Your leaders have a strong knowledge of the particular risks that pupils may face, and you work effectively in partnership with external groups to minimise these risks. The well-being and achievement of children looked after is kept in firm view in everything that you do.

This is a very inclusive school and there is a strong sense of community and care. Diversity within the school is celebrated and pupils are respectful of one another's choices. Leaders encourage this through the use of a wide range of enrichment activities, including clubs that support diversity, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Inspection findings

- Published performance information at the end of key stage 4 in 2017 and 2018 indicates that pupils have not achieved well enough in some subjects. In Year 11

in 2018, for example, outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics were not good. Pupils did not make good progress from their starting points. Therefore, I wanted to check how well pupils are currently taught in these core subjects across key stages 3 and 4 and to consider the impact leaders' actions are having on improving pupils' outcomes.

- We found that, in English and mathematics, the quality of teaching is variable and is not consistently good. In English, some teachers have good subject knowledge and effectively plan pupils' work so that it meets their needs. They provide pupils with good opportunities to use and apply their writing skills and encourage them to improve their work. When this is the case, pupils produce high-quality work and make good progress. However, these approaches to teaching English are inconsistent and this hinders pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is similarly variable. You are already taking steps to address this. Increasingly, for example, teachers provide pupils with step-by-step guidance on how to succeed in their learning and how to solve mathematical problems. You recognise that approaches taken in improving mathematics are not embedded and not used by all teachers. Pupils' misconceptions are also sometimes not addressed and this hampers pupils' ability to improve their skills.
- In order to improve pupils' progress in these core subjects, you have made a number of revisions to the curriculum. Your English language and literature curriculums, for example, now provide pupils with more opportunities to review texts and build their vocabulary. This is increasing pupils' engagement. In mathematics, the curriculum has been adapted so that it better prepares pupils for examinations. Pupils regularly practise and revisit topics to ensure that their knowledge and understanding are secure. However, leaders are not clear of the impact these revised approaches to the curriculum are having on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' progress over time has also been variable in other subjects. For example, in Year 11 in 2018, while pupils made good progress from their starting points in science in humanities they did not. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils are not making consistently good progress across the wider curriculum because the quality of teaching is also variable. Systems that enable leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching across all subjects on pupils' progress need to be developed further.
- Over time, the progress of disadvantaged has lagged behind that of other pupils in the school and others nationally. Therefore, I wanted to check how well this group of pupils' needs are being met and check that the school's use of the pupil premium funding is being effective. You, along with your leadership team have, rightly, acknowledged that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils needs to improve. Work is already underway to address this. Your ethos of building confidence in pupils and making them believe that they can succeed, for example, is an important part of your improvement strategy. Clearly, this is something that all your staff believe in and the impact of this collective approach is very evident on disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils say that they feel supported, and believe that they are helped, to achieve their very best. You and

your leaders have been effective in improving their attendance, their attitudes to learning and their behaviour. Exclusions have reduced. You have implemented a number of strategies in classrooms aimed at improving their progress and for some progress is clearly improving. However, the variability that exists in the quality of teaching across key stages 3 and 4 is preventing them from making the rapid progress needed to ensure that they achieve as well as other pupils. Leaders do not check closely enough that the pupil premium is resulting in rapid progress. Doing so is an important next step.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- agreed approaches to teaching and the curriculum in all subjects through key stages 3 and 4 are adhered to consistently by all staff
- they effectively evaluate the impact of their actions on bringing about consistently good teaching and on improving pupils' progress
- they check carefully that their spending of pupil premium funding is resulting in rapid progress of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Styles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you and other senior leaders about your plans for improvement and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also held a meeting with members of the governing body. I met with a range of pupils from Year 8 and Year 10. I visited lessons with senior leaders, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work in a range of subjects, including in the sixth form. I also scrutinised a range of documents related to safeguarding, behaviour and school improvement. I considered the responses of parents, pupils and staff to the online questionnaires.