

17 July 2019

Mr Julian Dutnall
CEO
The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls
Brentwood Road
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Dear Mr Dutnall

Short inspection of The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2019 with Kim McWilliam and Suzanne Bzicot, 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 first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have created a purposeful, safe, welcoming and happy environment. Leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Pupils have high aspirations. One pupil said that 'there is a real focus here on empowerment for women'. Inspectors observed this in practice when pupils led a Year 9 assembly concentrating on 'thinking big when choosing a career'.

Pupils are confident, courteous and articulate. They appreciate the opportunities that the school gives them. These include, for example, a wide range of educational visits and an onsite, vibrant 'farm'. Inspectors spoke to focus groups from each year and all pupils said that the school is very supportive.

Governors are committed to school improvement and know the school well. Together with the headteacher, they have put a system of 'health checks' in place to challenge and support school leaders.

Parents, staff and pupils who responded to surveys were positive about the school. Almost all staff who completed Ofsted's online survey said that they were proud to work at the school. The great majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to other parents. Typically, one parent wrote, 'I am proud that my daughter attends this school.'

You and your team have responded to the areas for improvement set out in the previous inspection report. Outcomes in English have continued to improve and 'health checks' have been put in place to monitor the impact of planned improvements. You know that the gap between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils has been reduced, but acknowledge that this is still too wide in some subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that runs through the school. The required checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are undertaken accurately and recorded clearly.

Staff receive appropriate training. Consequently, they know how to report concerns and are aware of particular risks for pupils, such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and 'county lines'. Governors understand and carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding diligently.

Pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, and also those who spoke to inspectors, said that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and, if it does happen, it is quickly dealt with. They are looking forward to the new well-being centre opening in September, where they will be able to access counselling and other mental health services.

Inspection findings

- For the first key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at how leaders ensure that the strong outcomes in English are replicated in other core subjects. This was because, for the last two years, pupils' progress in English has been much stronger than in mathematics and science.
- Senior leaders have increased the amount of time that departments are allocated to develop teaching and learning and to moderate and standardise pupils' work. Middle leaders say this has enabled them to improve pedagogy and share good practice. Middle leaders in English and mathematics have collaborated on planning their curriculum to build on the work completed by pupils in key stage 2. They also jointly plan the intervention timetable to maximise its impact on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors observed pupils being challenged and making good progress in English, maths and science lessons. For example, in all three subjects pupils used subject terminology accurately and with confidence.
- For the next key line of enquiry, we looked at the impact of leaders' actions to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and science. This was because, although the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved, there remains a large gap in these subjects between their progress and that of all pupils in the school.

- The school's strategy has some strengths. For example, there is effective use of assessment information to identify where intervention is needed and set targets. These are revised by middle leaders in light of the next assessment to determine whether further action is needed. Leaders have trained students in Years 12 and 13 to lead sessions for small groups of pupils. Additionally, counselling has been made available for pupils with mental health problems.
- In the mathematics and science lessons observed, teachers showed good awareness of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and provided them with appropriate challenge. Current data also indicates that disadvantaged students are making stronger progress. The work in books was presented well and demonstrated secure progress.
- Overall, however, the school's pupil premium plan lacks precision. Targets and criteria for success are too vague so that it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken.
- Thirdly, we focused on the progress of pupils in modern foreign languages. This was because, for the last three years, pupils' progress and their outcomes in GCSE examinations have been below national averages.
- Leaders recognised that modern foreign languages required a detailed review and action plan. Following a survey of pupils, German was phased out, to be replaced by Spanish. Evidence from lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teaching remains inconsistent and pupils' progress varies considerably. Effective teaching demonstrated good subject knowledge and most pupils actively taking part in lessons. Weaker teaching saw little use of the target language, some off-task behaviour and little extended writing in books.
- Leaders and governors are keeping the action plan under review, recognising that more time is needed to see the desired improvement in modern foreign languages results.
- For the final key line of enquiry, we looked at how leaders and governors evaluate the impact of their work. This was because evaluation against proposed outcomes was identified as a 'next step' in the previous inspection report.
- You and the school's governors have put in place a system of 'health checks' to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's work. These are aligned to the four Ofsted judgements and are presented each term to the governing body by leaders. As a result of this strategy, governors now know the school well and are able to provide challenge and support where needed.
- Senior and middle leaders have introduced 'learning walks', regular work scrutiny and a new observation format to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. They have used the findings to plan carefully targeted staff training opportunities and share good practice across the school. Individual pupil 'raising achievement plans' are shared with pupils, teachers and parents. These have helped to raise expectations and allow for careful monitoring of pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils' rates of progress in individual subject areas continues to reduce
- the impact of recent and intended curriculum changes, and leaders' work to improve consistency of teaching in modern foreign languages, are evaluated and pupils make good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Robinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection started with a discussion about your self-evaluation of the school, its strengths and the areas you have identified as needing improvement. Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders, observed an assembly and spoke to groups of pupils. Inspectors met with school leaders, including leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. The lead inspector also spoke with governors and a trustee.

Inspectors considered 72 responses to Parent View, 79 responses to the staff questionnaire and 63 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.