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Mr Stephen Lanckham
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Dear Mr Lanckham

Short inspection of Windsor High School and Sixth Form

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2016 with Dan Owen HMI, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Under your new headship, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. High results in GCSE and sixth-form examinations have been maintained and rates of progress are improving, including for disadvantaged pupils. Those pupils who join the school below the expected standard in literacy and numeracy for their age get off to a very good start in Year 7 in order to catch up with their peers.

You have ensured that there is calm and purposeful ethos around the school which is conducive to a good learning environment in the classroom. Most pupils maintain very high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to their work.

Pupils spoken to were highly positive about the school and said there is very little they would change.

As a result of good leadership:

- Arrangements for ensuring a culture of safeguarding in school are rigorous.
- Outcomes are high for pupils at GCSE and improving, including in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are diminishing the difference in outcomes at GCSE with their peers nationally.
- Much of teaching over time is at least good.
- The rates of fixed-term exclusions and absence are falling.
- Pupils behave well in school.

In the previous inspection report, inspectors praised senior leaders for being relentless in their drive to improve teaching and learning. Since your appointment, you have maintained the ambition through 'The Windsor Way' to secure further improvements and identified clearly where the school still needs to improve further.

Inspectors in the last report noted that the school should increase students' progress, particularly in mathematics, and seek better ways to use pupil premium funding to close the gap in attainment between students eligible for the pupil premium and others in the school.

Since then you and your leaders have worked hard and successfully to secure improvements in mathematics. In the provisional results for 2016, outcomes in mathematics compared favourably with the national average and rates of progress improved. The quality of teaching in mathematics is now consistently good.

Disadvantaged pupils overall made above expected progress in the 2016 GCSE examinations and are diminishing the difference in attainment with other pupils nationally.

This is not yet an outstanding school. You recognise that outcomes in some science and humanities subjects need to improve for some pupils. The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across all year groups and sets. Analysis of outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and minority ethnic pupils is not yet detailed enough to identify where there may be variations in outcomes or exclusions within sub-groups. A minority of parents and pupils responding to surveys and Parent View freetext were unhappy with aspects of the school, including provision and behaviour in mathematics, although the school has done much to improve outcomes in this subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that there is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school where everything is logged and recorded scrupulously. Staff are very well trained to be vigilant for any signs in pupils for changes in behaviour or appearance. Pupils spoken to said they feel very safe and well looked after in school, and this view was supported by pupil, parent and staff surveys.

The leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders are meticulous in their approach to safeguarding and governors support and challenge them effectively. Leaders have assessed the risks particular to the local area and have planned effective actions to promote the safety and welfare of pupils in these areas.

Pupils have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the ways in which they can keep themselves safe from a variety of risks, including radicalisation and extremism, because leaders are very thoughtful about the ways in which safeguarding messages are delivered. For example, assemblies are active, interesting and involve a wide variety of well-prepared and vetted external speakers and performers.

Work in tutorial sessions across the school is well planned and delivered consistently well by teachers.

Inspection findings

- Since you took up your post in January this year you have sought to strengthen leadership further in the appointment of key leadership posts. You have successfully prioritised mathematics and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils as previously identified key areas for further improvement.
- You, your leaders and governors have an accurate view of the areas that need to improve further which you have set in your five key priorities.
- In their survey responses, staff were overwhelmingly positive that the school had improved and was well led. Almost all of them said they were proud to work in the school.
- In the most recent GCSE examinations in 2016, provisional results indicate improved outcomes in mathematics and progress is on an upward trend. Outcomes are particularly good in English, technology and dance, and very high in vocational subjects in the sixth form.
- The difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has diminished further since the last inspection, despite a dip in 2015. In the most recent provisional GCSE results, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than their peers nationally from key stage 2 to 4 overall and in mathematics.
- Leaders track teaching closely. They know accurately where it is not yet good and have put in place measures to address this, for example supporting teachers through a mentoring programme in a successful partnership with the Windsor Academy Trust. There are many opportunities for teachers to observe colleagues teach through an 'open door culture' and to identify and share good practice through a teachers' website and in departments and faculties through 'pedagogy champs'. Teachers are encouraged to undertake action research to improve their practice.
- Where improvements in teaching have not been rapid enough, leaders have taken effective action to make replacements, for example in mathematics.
- You have also recognised that outcomes in some science and humanities subjects need to improve further. New leadership in these subjects has not yet had sufficient time to impact on improving outcomes at GCSE, especially for most-able pupils.
- The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. They conduct themselves well around the building and the very large majority have positive attitudes to learning. They thrive on additional responsibilities and the array of extra-curricular clubs on offer.
- A high level of attendance has been maintained and persistent absence is low, including for most groups of pupils, or in the case of disadvantaged pupils, is improving strongly.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has been reduced and is now below the national average. The school is working successfully on strategies to avoid resorting to exclusion.
- You are keen to be outward-looking to improve further, for example through

external reviews. This has had an impact in mathematics, which has led to recent improvements in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

- The 'Saturday School' has had a significant impact on enabling Year 7 pupils to catch up in their literacy by the time they start Year 8. This has been a very effective use of a small part of the pupil premium funding. The pupil premium also enables pupils to take part in sporting trips and scholarships to universities for the most able pupils.
- In Parent View responses the very large majority of parents said that their children felt safe in school and were happy. The majority of comments made by parents through Parent View freetext were positive. They typically commended the school for the quality of teaching, the welfare of pupils, after-school clubs, leadership and management, the sixth form and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- However, a minority who responded to Parent View or Parent View freetext said that they would not recommend the school to another parent. This is in contrast to the school's own surveys, which from a larger sample of parents show a higher level of satisfaction.
- Responses to the pupil survey and Parent View freetext responses were very mixed. Just over half of the pupils who expressed a view said they enjoyed school all or most of the time and two-fifths of the Parent View freetext responses indicated dissatisfaction, mainly around communication, teaching and behaviour in mathematics and the high turnover of staff. Inspectors found, however, that provision in mathematics has recently improved and that pupil behaviour and attitudes in lessons seen were good. This was further evidenced by the low rate of absence and exclusions.
- Outcomes for pupils are good overall as a result of good teaching over time, some of which is outstanding. However, work in some pupils' books, particularly in middle and lower sets, indicates that in some subjects and year groups, teachers are not challenging pupils to do as well as they can. In a small number of instances, pupils' books are poorly presented and teachers are slow to tackle low-level disruptive behaviour. Where pupils have been asked to redraft work this is not consistently followed through by teachers in line with the school's policy if pupils do not respond. At times, written feedback by teachers is too positive and does not help pupils improve their work.
- Outcomes in science and humanities subjects, particularly for most-able pupils, are not yet as good as they are in other subjects.
- Analysis of outcomes for pupils learning English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils does not identify variations within the groups to identify which sub-groups may not be making as much progress as others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is at least consistently good across subjects and sets, including science and humanities, to ensure that pupils from their different starting points are making more rapid progress, enabling more most-able pupils to achieve the highest possible grades

- they engage with parents and pupils to establish why such a large minority of respondents to surveys and Parent View freetext were unhappy with aspects of the work of the school
- analysis is more rigorous of outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those learning English as an additional language.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local advisory board which has responsibility for governance, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met you, the chief executive and deputy chief executive of the multi-academy trust and other senior members of staff and the chair of the local advisory body which has responsibility for governance. Inspectors visited parts of 11 lessons, observed jointly with senior leaders. They also observed pupils as they moved around the school. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. There were 102 responses to Parent View and 91 responses to Parent View freetext. Inspectors also took account of 204 pupil survey responses and 108 staff survey responses.

Inspectors considered how effective the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are; how well behaviour and attendance are managed, especially for those pupils who are excluded; outcomes for pupils, including most-able pupils and minority ethnic pupils, in mathematics, science and humanities; and how effectively the pupil premium funding is deployed for disadvantaged pupils.