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Miss Clare Talbot
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Dear Miss Talbot

Short inspection of Woolmer Hill School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018 with Dom Cook, Her Majesty's 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 was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good. The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in January 2016, you have provided strong and effective leadership which has stabilised the school during a challenging period. Your actions and decisions have ensured that pupils' academic progress and welfare have not been compromised by financial pressures.

Your leadership style has gained the support of staff, parents and carers, pupils and governors. Staff feel valued and empowered. Those who met with inspectors, and/or completed the staff survey, were remarkably positive about the school, with all of them being proud to work at it and feeling that it is well led and managed. Parents are also overwhelmingly positive and the school is increasingly gaining the confidence of the local community. Admissions in Year 7 are expected to rise significantly in September 2018, so that the year group will be full for the first time in many years. Many parents complimented the school, writing, for example, 'the management of the school is proactive in ensuring the education and welfare of any pupil has the highest priority'.

Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has continued to improve. The majority of pupils make good progress in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, physics, art and vocational subjects. As a result, many pupils achieve outcomes in their GCSE examinations which are above, and sometimes well above, national averages. Standards in science, which was identified as an area of the curriculum needing improvement at the previous inspection, have improved significantly. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress have been improving. In 2016, these pupils achieved outcomes which were in line with other pupils nationally,

although they dipped in 2017 due to the poor attendance by a small group of pupils.

The atmosphere in your school is one of calm purpose and enjoyment of learning. Pupils agree this is a friendly school. They particularly value that staff know them very well and provide them with helpful support for both their academic and pastoral needs. Pupils feel their views are listened to and acted upon. For example, they appreciate the recent improvements made to the cafeteria. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are kind and respectful towards each other, their teachers and visitors.

You, your leadership team and governors are ambitious for the pupils and carefully consider their best interests in everything you do. Governors know the school very well and provide strong challenge and support to you and other leaders. The multi-academy trust also provides valuable support to leaders and helps to ensure that pupils have access to an increasing variety of extra-curricular opportunities.

Self-evaluation is accurate and reliable and your improvement plan identifies precisely the aspects of the school which could be improved further. You are fully aware that the attendance and progress of some disadvantaged pupils needs to improve and that standards of teaching in some subjects do not yet meet your high expectations. You are tackling the underlying causes of these issues and have rightly embraced external support to help you to identify and implement improvement strategies.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. They have acted on the areas for improvement identified in an external review of safeguarding arranged by the school last year, to be confident that previous good practice is now even stronger. For example, governors now monitor and evaluate safeguarding policies and procedures more systematically. All teachers and staff receive regular and helpful training that reinforces that they know how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

A dedicated team of pastoral staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside pupils, parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff closely monitor pupils causing concern, and record interventions carefully. Case studies discussed with inspectors showed evidence of timely actions and thorough liaison with external providers to make certain that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and supportive. They particularly value the work of the safeguarding team and they have full confidence that they can talk to them if they have concerns. Pupils report that bullying is rare but dealt with effectively when it does occur. Parents say their children feel safe and are well cared for. You regularly provide parents with useful information, for example

information booklets and workshops to help them keep their children safe on the internet. Pupils and parents also appreciate that the school takes the promotion of mental health very seriously. One parent wrote, 'I was overwhelmed with all of the mental health support provided.'

The curriculum prepares pupils well for managing their own safety. A comprehensive and well-structured programme of activities delivered through lessons, tutor time and assemblies supports pupils' personal development and welfare very well. The pupils that inspectors spoke to had a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have prioritised improving the poor attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils as it is the biggest barrier to their progress. Attendance is monitored meticulously and any absences are now followed up more quickly. Leaders have taken actions to strengthen home–school links. The school has invested in additional support from the education welfare officer and also employs its own home–school link worker. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now attending school more regularly, although their absence rates are still higher than other pupils'.
- Leaders demonstrate a firm commitment and determination to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and reverse the dip which occurred in 2017. Particularly for these pupils, leaders have developed carefully considered strategies to improve the curriculum, teaching and support, including a broad range of social and emotional interventions such as mentoring and counselling.
- Outcomes are good for a small group of disadvantaged pupils who take part in vocational qualifications delivered through the Waverley Federation, using additional funds for these pupils.
- Inspectors found strong evidence to support leaders' assertions that disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. In lessons, staff provide well-considered support for these pupils, who get down to work just as well as other pupils and make similar progress. A review of pupils' work showed that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in many subjects. For example, they used adventurous language in their writing in English and showed a deepening ability to draw inferences from texts.
- Leaders have taken effective actions to further improve the quality of teaching. They check teaching carefully and have identified key areas for improvement, particularly in improving challenge and the style of questions teachers pose. Staff share this strong culture to improve and are committed to sharing best practice. They welcome the fortnightly training sessions where the most effective teaching approaches are shared. Also, leaders have been resolute in tackling weak teaching and have used support procedures effectively.
- Effective teaching was seen by inspectors in a range of subjects, including some where teachers had received extensive support. Teachers demonstrate a passion for their subjects and pupils' attitudes to their learning are overwhelmingly

positive. Teachers ask questions which make pupils think hard and work is well-pitched to provide the right levels of challenge and support. For example, in science pupils were successfully constructing increasingly difficult word equations because they had been supported with strategies to identify and sequence the relevant pieces of information.

- Leaders acknowledge that there are some inconsistencies in teaching which result in pupils making less progress in a few subjects, for example in modern foreign languages. The multi-academy trust has provided valuable support to strengthen leadership and teaching but staff recruitment remains a challenge.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance remains a priority
- the differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils diminish again to bring them more closely in line with other pupils nationally
- standards of teaching continue to improve so that progress in science and modern foreign languages is in line with the good progress made in other subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of Weydon Multi Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I and my colleague held meetings with you, other leaders, staff and governors. We spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited several classes to observe learning, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed them at breaktime and lunchtime. A range of documents were considered, including leaders' self-evaluation, safeguarding, current pupils' progress and the work of governors. The team took account of responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the outcomes of a staff survey (38 responses) and a pupil survey (89 responses).