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Sharon Chinnappa
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Dear Sharon Chinnappa

Short inspection of Prospect School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2017 with Hugh Betterton, 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school provides well for its pupils. Pupils make good progress in their learning and wider development. They are well prepared to take on further study and training when they leave. Staff build very positive relationships with pupils and help them foster positive attitudes. As a result, pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour increases during their time at the school. Pupils enjoy learning new topics and concentrate well on their work.

You provide strong leadership for the school. Since joining in September 2016, you have successfully increased the focus on pupils' academic progress. You have secured the confidence of parents, pupils and staff alike. You have sensibly broadened the curriculum to aid pupils' motivation and prepare them more fully for further education and training. You have developed a sound approach to assessment in English, mathematics and science. As a result, teachers now have better information with which to plan teaching that meets pupils' needs. Leaders and governors have a clearer understanding of pupils' achievement in these core subjects. However, leaders and governors do not have all the information they need for a clear understanding of pupils' achievement across the whole curriculum. Your plan to develop assessment in other subjects to resolve this issue is well considered.

As a headteacher new to the school, you have been supported well by your leadership team and by other headteachers of special schools in the area.

Governors have also been supportive of the changes that you have introduced to the school. However, with so many new governors in post at present, and the governing body not being at full capacity, governors' role in holding school leaders to account has not been as strong as it could be. Governors are aware of this and there is a drive to increase capacity and capability in the governing body.

Leaders have worked successfully to improve areas identified for attention at the last inspection. Pupils now consistently receive helpful guidance that enables them to improve their work. Pupils make increasingly strong progress in English and mathematics because the curriculum is well structured, and teaching meets pupils' needs, in particular at key stage 3. Recently introduced personal development lessons for key stage 3 pupils are helping them to make rapid gains in their written communication. An effective reading support programme has also resulted in pupils making strong progress in reading. Leaders have worked effectively to improve attendance. As a result of this, students' attendance has improved greatly over the past three years.

You have rightly recognised the need to develop further the use of assessment and performance information so that pupils' progress can be monitored more closely and staff held to account for this progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Adults have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. All are fully briefed and receive relevant and timely induction and training. They know and follow the correct procedures for passing on any concerns to those responsible for safeguarding. Staff and parents reported that pupils are safe in the school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Pupils know to treat others with respect, whatever their culture, background or lifestyle.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed and agreed our focus for the day. This included looking at the teaching of English and mathematics, and how far teaching provides disadvantaged and most-able pupils with the opportunity to make good progress in their learning. We also agreed to look at the breadth of the curriculum offered to pupils and how this has contributed to their development. Leaders' work to reduce fixed-term exclusions and improve pupils' behaviour was also a focus of the inspection.
- Teaching is typically well focused on pupils' needs, including pupils who are both disadvantaged and most able. Teachers check effectively that pupils understand what is being taught. When a pupil does not yet understand a new idea, teachers support them until they do. Pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking and learning, and this helps them to make good progress.
- The teaching of English and mathematics has been enhanced by the introduction of a rigorous assessment system for these subjects. Teachers can now identify

gaps in pupils' learning more effectively. Teachers' focus on reading at key stage 3 has led to an improvement in pupils' communication skills across the curriculum. However, the teaching of GCSE English and mathematics does not yet fully extend pupils' understanding in these subjects. The most able pupils in key stage 4 make steady progress, but you rightly recognise that they could be stretched further.

- You have identified the need for greater breadth in the curriculum and so have introduced new subjects at key stage 3 and a choice of qualifications to study at key stage 4. The broadening of the curriculum has increased the enthusiasm that pupils have for learning. Pupils are prepared better for further education and work. However, the development of assessment in these new subjects is at a relatively early stage. Consequently, leaders do not yet have a deep enough understanding of how well pupils are doing across the curriculum.
- Leaders have sharpened the way in which they analyse and report on pupils' achievement and other areas of the school's performance. However, governors have limited information about achievement beyond that in the core subjects. In addition, they have not consistently sought the information they need to gain an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff build positive and supportive relationships with pupils very quickly. This enables pupils to take more responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils also develop resilience in managing challenging situations as they progress through the school. Consequently, the number of exclusions and incidents of seriously challenging behaviour have decreased over the past three years. Similarly, pupils' attendance, including that of those who are most able and disadvantaged, is improving over time. Pupils and their families benefit from the effective work of the school's 'well-being team'. There are robust induction programmes in place when pupils join the school. This ensures that pupils with previously poor attendance receive timely support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers improve their use of assessment to give an accurate picture of pupils' progress across the curriculum, so that any gaps in learning can be addressed
- performance information is analysed consistently and precisely, providing governors with the insight needed to hold leaders tightly to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Stuart Cateridge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy at the start of the day. We discussed the key areas that we would focus on during the inspection and agreed the timings of activities. During the day, I held further discussions with you. I met with the chair and three other members of the governing body. Inspectors observed teaching in nine lessons jointly with a leader. We also scrutinised pupils' work and progress files. I met with two key stage 4 pupils, and the team inspector met with safeguarding leaders and curriculum leaders. We took account of 22 staff survey responses and six responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' analysis of pupil progress data and safeguarding policies and procedures. I also spoke by telephone with the local authority officer linked to the school.