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Mr Martin McLeman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McLeman

Short inspection of Queen Elizabeth's School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017 with Michele Chilcott, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Supported by a strong governing body, you have made your expectations clear and shown determination and resolve to improve the quality of education pupils receive. You have made several astute choices to strengthen the pastoral and subject leadership of the school. This is beginning to have an impact on the attendance, behaviour and progress of pupils. There is a strong sense of community in the school both from staff and from pupils, founded on a strong Christian ethos.

The majority of parents are happy with the quality of education provided and have confidence in the leadership. However, staff changes impeded progress in some areas and this has affected the perception of a number of parents in regard to the quality of education and behaviour at Queen Elizabeth's. Some parents expressed concern about the number of staff changes and the impact this had on behaviour and learning. However, at present, staffing is secure and the behaviour in lessons creates a positive environment for learning. Pupil progress in Years 9 to 11 is in line with national averages but the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils were considerably lower in 2015/16. The decisive actions you have taken have made a palpable difference to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. There is increasing evidence that there have also been improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, but you accurately identify that this aspect requires further

work.

The school provides a calm, purposeful environment which the pupils take pride in. Pupils feel cared for and appreciate the support for their physical and mental well-being. Transition from middle school to Queen Elizabeth's is a strength, resulting in the majority of pupils settling very quickly and happily. Vulnerable pupils are particularly well looked after. Discipline structures reinforce expectations. The vast majority of the school community appreciate and support the systems. As a result, behaviour is improving and the use of sanctions is declining.

There was a decline in standards in the sixth form between 2014 and 2016 which you have addressed by changes in the leadership of this area. Learners on academic courses were making less than expected progress. Leaders' actions are increasingly successful in raising students' outcomes and aspirations. However, recent aspects of improvement need more time to impact fully. Applied courses have been a strength of the school and continue to be so. There has been an immediate impact of changes to leadership in terms of the progression of learners to universities, which was greatly increased in 2017.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, including governors, has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding procedures in line with current legislation. Inspection evidence shows that you have acted decisively where safeguarding concerns have been raised. Your communication with outside agencies is timely and effective. Your communication arrangements in school provide a secure network to support any child at risk of harm.

Pupils feel safe and are safe in the school. They receive and understand the advice provided about potential risks and how to stay safe in different situations, including on the internet. Pupils respect each other and value their differences. Bullying is rare and, where it does occur, pupils are confident that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. The overwhelming majority of parents believe that their children are safe, happy and well looked after at school.

The governors are well equipped to oversee this aspect of the school's work. The designated governor for safeguarding has a wealth of relevant experience and expertise in order to support the school in maintaining pupils' safety and well-being. There is a culture of vigilance and care within the school. All pupils spoken to felt confident that there was an adult in school they could talk to about their own, or a friend's, concerns. They also felt confident that these concerns would be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Inspection findings

- To determine whether the school remained good, the first line of enquiry centred on the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The progress and attendance of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in 2016 were considerably lower than the national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils in 2016/17 was much improved compared to previous years and came close to that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. This improvement has been maintained in the current academic year. The improvement in attendance has not yet provided an equally impressive improvement in academic outcomes for this group. While in some subjects disadvantaged pupils did achieve better than previously, this is not consistent across all subjects. Inspection evidence shows that for current pupils, disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged of similar ability are producing work of a similar standard.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the impact leaders have had on improving teaching and learning in some specific subjects, including history, religious education (RE) and languages. The achievement of pupils in these subjects was lower than national averages in 2016. While the school leaders have made a substantial difference to the performance of some subject areas, there are others where the school has been less effective. Achievement in mathematics has improved overall. In history, the achievement of pupils in 2017 was much improved; however, in RE and French there was less evidence of improvement. School leaders are aware of the issues in languages and RE in particular. They are already taking effective action to address these with curriculum changes.
- A further line of enquiry was the effectiveness of teaching and learning for the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2016, the attainment of high prior-attaining pupils was below the national average, although other groups were in line with national averages. In 2017, the performance of the most able in science, English and humanities had improved compared to previous years. However, teaching is not yet consistent in ensuring that the needs of the most able learners are successfully met. In languages, examples were seen of good practice in adapting the teaching to a range of abilities. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in both 2016 and 2017 was much improved and this group of pupils is supported well.
- Pupils' attendance and behaviour for learning was another area for the inspectors to investigate. Attendance overall was below the national average in 2016. For disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, their attendance was considerably below national averages. Attendance in 2017 has improved to be above national averages and, for disadvantaged pupils, absences have swiftly reduced. The behaviour of pupils in lower sets had been a cause for concern for parents and the school. To address this, you introduced closer monitoring of behaviour by pastoral leaders. As a result, there is very little poor or disruptive behaviour in lessons, particularly in lower sets. However, where teaching was not closely matched to the needs of the pupils, behaviour deteriorated. Where pupils are stretched and challenged, by high expectations, they rise to the challenge.

- The final line of enquiry was the progress and achievement in the sixth form. The progress in almost all subject areas was in line with national averages in 2016. However, the progress in academic subjects overall was below the national average and had declined over the three years 2014 to 2016. Inspection evidence showed that teaching in the sixth form is typically well structured and supports learning. The results in 2017 showed an improvement in attainment at grades A* to A and A* to B for academic subjects. Several subjects showed evidence of improving the rate of progress of learners. However, further work needs to be done to embed the changes made and ensure that learners make the progress of which they are capable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outcomes for students in the sixth form continue to improve such that learners make good progress from their various starting points
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerated so that they achieve in line with all others nationally from similar starting points
- teaching provides sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

David New
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. Inspectors had meetings with pupils, including sixth form learners, subject leaders and pastoral leaders. Inspectors observed learning in a number of lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. We scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, safeguarding documents, records of checks school leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, and information relating to attendance, behaviour and exclusions.

The inspection took account of responses from 168 parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered responses to questionnaires from 223 pupils and 63 staff.