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Mr Daniel Leonard
Headteacher
West Hatch High School
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Dear Mr Leonard

Short inspection of West Hatch High School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2018 with Ashlie Hughes and Philip Barr, 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 September 2013.

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 as headteacher just over a year ago you made some changes to the leadership team and reviewed some of the working practices within the school. You provide energy, vision and a clear sense of direction for the school. Staff are proud to work in the school and share your vision. As one parent commented, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the dedication, skills and expertise my daughter experiences at this school.'

You and the leadership team have set the tone for the school's high aspirations. In 2017 the progress score for pupils who sat GCSE examinations was well above average. Attainment was also above average. However, you are not complacent and will not be content until all pupils achieve so that they are 'the best that they can be'. Improved attainment is a result of the continued improvements made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. Leaders have an accurate and in-depth understanding of the school and its strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders know that there is more work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make as good progress as others.

Governors contribute significantly to the life of the school and to the strength in leadership and management. They possess a very high level of skill that enables them to provide a finely balanced combination of challenge and support to school leaders. Governors share your high expectations of pupils and staff, and they are very proud of the achievements of staff and pupils at West Hatch High School.

The school provides a calm and orderly learning environment and pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. At break and lunchtime we observed good behaviour and pupils of different ages, gender and race mixing harmoniously. The vast majority of pupils and parents responding to Parent View praised the school. However, a very small minority raised some concerns about behaviour and communication. You are already taking action to address these concerns. Morale among staff is high. They feel well supported by senior leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all the required pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff to ensure they are suitable to work with pupils. Staff receive regular up-to-date training that meets the latest guidance on keeping pupils safe. Staff who join the school mid-year are provided with an induction programme related to safeguarding. Governors review the safeguarding policy annually and check the safeguarding arrangements throughout the year. Staff understand that it is their duty to ensure that pupils are safe and they understand what to do if they have any concerns about the welfare of a pupil.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are very proactive in monitoring the well-being of vulnerable pupils. Leaders work well with external agencies in order to support the needs of vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding records are precise and are kept secure.

Most pupils and parents agree that the school is safe and that pupils are well looked after. Most of the pupils spoken to say that bullying and racism are rare and that if they should occur staff will help them resolve the issues. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. The website provides information for pupils and parents about keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, inspectors focused on the following aspects of the school's provision:
 - how successfully leaders are using the additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - whether the curriculum in key stage 3 is providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop the required level of skills and knowledge across a range of subjects
 - the extent to which current sixth-form students are continuing to make good progress and whether the school is ensuring they are sufficiently well prepared for their post-16 options.
- You use the special educational needs funding creatively to provide personalised support for individual pupils. Pupils are provided with support for their emotional and social well-being as well as their learning. When you are unable to provide

the support required you making use of local specialist provision, for example the local special school. The work in pupils' books indicates that most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress.

- Year 7 pupils who receive additional support with their reading are benefiting from the well-structured programme they follow. The pupils who read to me were all confident, enthusiastic readers who read with a high degree of fluency. They made good use of their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. These pupils are making rapid progress.
- You have reviewed the provision you provide for disadvantaged pupils. Each pupil has a mentor who makes sure they have the help they need and who monitors their progress. It is too early to see the full impact of mentoring on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Visiting lessons, we found that disadvantaged pupils are being suitably challenged in lessons and most are making good progress. However, school progress information shows that the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially middle-ability pupils, are not making as much progress as other pupils in the school.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities was below average last year and in previous years. It has now improved as a result of the work the school has done with pupils and parents. The persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has reduced significantly and attendance is now above average. This is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- You identified that Year 9 pupils' progress declined and they appeared to be less motivated than in previous years. Pupils now follow an options programme in Year 9 to prepare them for their GCSE courses. Pupils and parents are very positive about this change, especially the opportunity to take a course in finances.
- When visiting lessons, we noticed that most teachers have high expectations of key stage 3 pupils. However, not all teachers ensure that pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils are provided with work that is challenging and develops their skills and knowledge. Most teachers consistently apply the school's assessment policy and as a result it was clear to see how this has helped pupils to make good progress. We agreed that there are still a small minority of staff who are still not constantly applying the assessment policy.
- At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to track the progress of sixth-form students more closely so that they could quickly identify those who were falling behind. Leaders have been very successful in improving the progress of sixth-form students. Progress has improved and in 2017 the progress of A-level students was well above average. Current students continue to make rapid progress because teachers provide students with precise guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils are complimentary about the choice of courses offered and the quality of careers advice. There is an extensive programme of visiting speakers and students have the opportunity to undertake work experience. However, we found

that there are limited opportunities for students to undertake leadership roles and to develop skills such as debating in the wider curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the actions taken to support disadvantaged pupils are consolidated and fully embedded so they make more rapid progress
- teachers consistently apply the school assessment policy to ensure it matches the best practice with the school
- all staff have the same high expectations of pupils in terms of the presentation of their work
- there are more opportunities for sixth-form students to develop a wider range of skills in preparation for employment or education.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and your team of senior leaders, three groups of pupils and four members of the governing body. We also met with the head of sixth form, special educational needs coordinator, deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher responsible for the use of the pupil premium. We also attended an early morning briefing to introduce ourselves to staff. We met informally with pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. You and two of your senior leaders joined us to observe pupils at work in lessons. We reviewed your self-evaluation and improvement planning, safeguarding policy and procedures, including records of pre-employment checks, and records of behaviour and attendance. We considered the views of 83 parents given on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 55 free-text responses. We also took into account 36 pupil responses and 79 staff responses from those who completed the Ofsted online questionnaires.