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Melanie Hooper and Martin Amos
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Dear Ms Hooper and Mr Amos

Short inspection of Calthorpe Park School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Lizzie Jeanes, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a very clear vision for the school and are confident that the school will build on its strengths as it continues on its journey to outstanding. The school is led by you both, as joint headteachers, and your skills complement each other well. Together with your senior leadership team, you have accurately, honestly and thoughtfully analysed every facet of the school's performance. Consequently, you are knowledgeable about what needs to be done to improve the school further. By developing the skills of your associate leaders, you have increased the capacity to bring about the necessary changes, although the impact of these is not yet consistently evident.

You have driven initiatives and supported others to help you to put them in place. You are honest in your evaluation of these initiatives, making sure they are refined and prioritised to have the maximum impact on pupils' progress. There is emerging evidence of this impact, for example in your work with disadvantaged pupils, and successful strategies are being replicated in other areas. You have created a very calm, purposeful and orderly school with the 'business of learning' at its heart, and pupils thrive as a result.

You have overseen skilfully the extensive development of a new building while continuing to focus on the core business of teaching and learning. You have ensured that the new environment will support current and future learning and have reviewed aspects of the school's organisation to provide better outcomes for pupils.

For example, staff and pupils speak highly of the changes you have made to how tutor groups are organised. Staff say this has led to increased interaction between older and younger pupils. As a result, the school community is more cohesive, with only rare incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Pupils and staff have a sense of shared ownership of their school, and their contributions to its growing effectiveness are valued. Staff and pupils are positive about the school and are proud to be members of your community.

Pupils appreciate the strong set of values and clear expectations on which your school is based. The 'Calthorpe Way', explained articulately and confidently by pupils, underpins the school's work. There is a strong emphasis on the development of personal and social skills which many parents commented on. One stated that the school 'gives opportunities to extend my child's growth as a person as well as academically'. Senior pupils spoke about 'our staff', reflecting both the respect in which they hold them, but also the strength of the 'togetherness' that they value. They appreciate, for example, the additional planned revision sessions, the commitment that teachers show to helping them improve their work and the wide range of information and opportunities they are given beyond the classroom, including citizenship days. Your pupils are keen to learn, ambitious for their school, and unfailingly polite and courteous.

Pupils are refreshingly understanding of the challenges the school faces, for example when staff leave. They are mature and reflective in wanting to work with leaders to find solutions. They appreciate the high regard in which the student voice is held and the way their views are listened to, although they reported they 'would like to know if the school has acted on what we asked for'. Such comments are a hallmark of this school; the staff, pupils and parents are ambitious for its success.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You are rightly aware of the need to improve the progress of some pupils. The development of a culture based on 'the rest of us like the best of us' has resulted in teachers beginning to share effective practice, particularly about personalised feedback to pupils. Staff development is now largely based on classroom practice and the sharing of teaching techniques. Staff feel empowered by this individualised support, but the impact of these initiatives on pupils' outcomes is not yet clear. School performance information suggests that inconsistencies in pupils' progress in different subjects are diminishing. You recognise the need to check that your work to achieve consistently high-quality teaching is enabling the most able pupils to make more rapid progress.

Your expectations for how teachers manage pupils' behaviour are clearly defined, and, consequently, low-level disruption has been largely eradicated. Overall, in the classrooms we visited during the inspection pupils were engaged and on task, willing to learn and responsive to teachers' questioning. The recent introduction of a 'behaviour ladder' is enabling you to monitor more closely any minor disruptions in class. This new system, along with the work being undertaken to achieve more consistent, high-quality teaching, makes you confident that pupils will continue to remain focused on their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Clear and comprehensive systems are in place, including detailed and high-quality records. Leaders are relentless in pursuing excellence in this area and there is a clear commitment to safeguarding evident in the school. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, confirm that they feel safe and know exactly what to do and who to approach if they need support. Leaders have a clear understanding of the wider issues that can affect pupils. Effective programmes are in place to ensure that pupils are knowledgeable of and alert to any risks to their safety. The introduction of the 'phone zone', for example, is widely appreciated by pupils who understand that this is a measure to help them feel safe. The senior student leadership team also described the 'outstanding pastoral care' the school provides to support them.

While attendance remains a challenge for some groups of pupils, there are improving trends. Leaders have implemented clear strategies to improve attendance, which have raised the profile and importance of coming to school regularly. While gains in attendance rates are marginal, the impact of the school's work is beginning to be seen. Similarly, there is a reduction in the numbers of pupils who have been excluded from school, including the numbers of vulnerable pupils. Leaders are working with the local college to develop alternative curriculum provision opportunities to help disengaged pupils become more focused on achieving well.

Inspection findings

- We explored how well the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are achieving across a broad range of subjects. Leaders recognise the challenges this presents in a school where achievement is good but could be better. You have put a strong emphasis on equipping teachers with the skills to 'inspire pupils to aspire' to higher outcomes.
- Middle leaders are developing strategies to work more closely on the identification of pupils who are potentially underachieving. It is too early to judge the impact of this work, but pupils report that they are challenged and supported to achieve highly. Their responses to the pupil survey say that more information and guidance about future careers and pathways would motivate them further.
- We considered how effectively leaders are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. The work being undertaken to improve outcomes for these pupils is a real strength of the school. The leader responsible is passionate about improving outcomes for the vulnerable pupils and the plans in place are thorough, systematic and effective in their impact. The school's pupil premium team meets frequently to create personalised extra help, which includes a focus on literacy. The impact of these initiatives is seen in the increase in reading ages and some reduction in negative behaviour.

- Leaders are aware of the growing population of the school and are planning ahead to ensure that their successful work continues to extend and adapt to meet disadvantaged pupils' needs. This is an example where the clear and confident vision of leaders is based on concrete examples of success.
- Another focus of the inspection was how effectively leaders ensure that all pupils behave well and engage with their learning. Leaders are aware of the historical pattern of fixed-term exclusions and how a high proportion of those excluded were vulnerable pupils, including those who were repeatedly excluded. Leaders have recently implemented a range of strategies to improve the engagement of vulnerable pupils, including a new behaviour system. It is too soon to judge the difference that these changes are making.
- Leaders are focusing on improving the literacy skills of vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. School leaders meet regularly with parents of pupils who have education, health and care plans. More frequent communication between home and school is helping to improve the progress of these pupils.
- Finally, we considered the curriculum and how its delivery enables all pupils to achieve well and be prepared effectively for their next stages in learning. School leaders are aware of the in-school variations between subject areas and the need to raise standards further across the curriculum for all groups of pupils. This is being tackled by the strong focus on the quality of teaching and the recent reorganisation of the curriculum to provide more time for GCSE study. Leaders assert that these steps will enable pupils to develop and consolidate the skills needed to achieve highly across all areas. While this change has been generally welcomed by staff and pupils, the long-term impact is yet to be seen consistently across the school.
- Subject leaders work increasingly effectively together. There is some evidence of a sharper analysis of trends, planned intervention sessions and greater communication. However, there remains too much variation across subjects, including between the core and non-core subjects. There is a need for subject leaders to more consistently analyse the impact of current work to support rapid improvement to pupils' rates of progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- initiatives to further improve the effectiveness of teaching and provide greater challenge for all pupils continue to be applied and embedded across subject areas
- leaders at all levels evaluate consistently the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes, so that standards continue to rise.

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

Patricia Goodhead
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the course of this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you both, senior and middle leaders, staff, governors and pupils. We also observed learning, with leaders, across a range of subjects. School documents were examined, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Inspectors checked school policies relating to safeguarding and behaviour and explored how the school's additional funding is being spent. We took into account 183 responses to Parent View, 82 responses to the staff survey, responses from 184 pupils and their comments.