

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Mark Blackman
Headteacher
Shaftesbury School
Salisbury Road
Shaftesbury
Dorset
SP7 8ER

Dear Mr Blackman

Short inspection of Shaftesbury School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2017 with Mary Hoather, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have provided effective leadership since your appointment shortly before the previous inspection in 2013. You have recruited several new senior leaders and built a strong leadership team. Senior and middle leaders use detailed information about pupils' progress to monitor the quality of teaching and so hold staff to account for the effectiveness of their work. Teaching is improving because you have challenged staff to take responsibility for their professional development and provided good-quality training.

In 2016, pupils' progress across eight GCSE subjects was in line with the national average; however, their progress in humanities subjects was above average. You have secured the improvements in English and mathematics teaching that you were asked to at the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who attain a grade C or better in both GCSE English and mathematics has risen year on year for three years. Current pupils' work and the school's assessment information show that this pattern is on track to continue.

You have maintained the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils respect their teachers and, in particular, they appreciate the extra help that many teachers offer them at

lunchtime and after school.

Disadvantaged pupils' progress lagged behind other pupils in many areas last year. You are successfully improving their progress by providing extra help to individual pupils when they need it. You were asked to increase rates of pupils' attendance at the previous inspection. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance, in particular, has improved as a result of the efforts your staff have made.

In 2016, pupils who joined the school with low attainment made very good progress. The most able pupils did not achieve as highly. Your work to raise the aspirations of these pupils is paying off. Teachers in most subjects, but not all, are setting work which is sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. You recognise that this is an area for further improvement. You are reforming and improving support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leadership in this area is strong. Consequently, these pupils' progress is improving. In 2015, the progress of students in the sixth form taking academic courses was above the national average. Last year, their progress fell back and was in line with the national average. Leaders are working to raise the attainment of students in the sixth form and there are signs that this is having some success.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders demonstrate an unwavering commitment to pupils' safety and welfare. The well-trained safeguarding team is effective in ensuring that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are aware of possible indications of harm because they receive regular training and ongoing updates about safeguarding practice. The school's records show that any concerns about pupils' welfare are acted on quickly and followed up tenaciously. Thorough checks are conducted on the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations including when using the internet. As a result, pupils understand the steps they need to take to avoid these risks. The majority of parents believe their child is happy at school and is kept safe. Pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed they are well cared for at school and feel safe. They expressed confidence that staff deal with any cases of bullying effectively.

The school has good links with outside agencies; consequently, when expert intervention is required, communication with other professionals is rapid and effective. Senior leaders ensure that everyone in the school, including in the boarding house, understands their duty to be alert. Therefore, a culture of vigilance has been established across the school.

Inspection findings

- To judge if the school remained good, the first key line of enquiry considered the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, this group of pupils made less progress from their starting points than other pupils nationally. Senior leaders have ensured that help is focused effectively on pupils' individual needs. They have increased support for disadvantaged pupils, for example by appointing a pastoral worker for key stage 4. As a result of many individual interventions, disadvantaged pupils currently develop skills more quickly than in previous years. Their progress in GCSE English and mathematics, in particular, has improved strongly. However, senior leaders do not fully evaluate the effect of the different types of support being provided.
- Another key line of enquiry evaluated the most able pupils' progress. The progress of the most able pupils across eight GCSE subjects, although close to the national average in 2016, was not as strong as that of pupils with middle or lower starting points. Due to a programme to raise motivation and aspiration, the most able pupils' creative thinking skills and attitudes for success have been enhanced. Leaders have asked teachers to raise their expectations of what the most able pupils are capable of. Work in pupils' books indicates that in the majority of cases teaching does challenge these pupils effectively; however, this is still not consistent.
- A third key line of enquiry explored the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. Leaders have ensured that teaching on sixth form courses provides demanding activities for students. Inspectors saw this in several subject areas. In science subjects, for example, students are asked to link their learning to applications in the wider world. This extends students' understanding well and motivates them. Students' work, and assessment information gathered by teachers, shows that their progress on academic courses has improved. Boys, in particular, are making better progress than last year. Nonetheless, sixth form students believe they could learn more effectively if given more guidance on methods of learning at the start of their courses.
- A final key line of enquiry looked at the support provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This group of pupils made less progress in Year 11 last year than they could be expected to. The leader responsible for this area of the school's work has brought in specially trained staff where necessary so that pupils receive the expert support they need. At the same time he has ensured that extra help is integrated into mainstream teaching. Consequently, the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is now more effective.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to other parents. However, leaders are aware of the need to improve communication between home and school. They have recently begun using social media, for example, in order to strengthen this area of their work. Even so, more work needs to be done to provide better information and develop closer links with parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- interventions being made to support disadvantaged pupils are fully evaluated in order to identify which ones are the most successful
- teachers consistently use information about pupils' progress to set sufficiently demanding work for the most able
- sixth form students receive good advice about effective study habits so that they are better able to use their time efficiently
- more opportunities are created for parents to provide feedback on their views of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the Southern Academies Trust, 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

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, senior leaders, the chair of the local governing body and one other governor, the chair of the Southern Academies Trust board and one other director. We held a meeting with pupils and spoke with many other pupils informally at break and lunchtime. We made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. We looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. We scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. We took account of responses to questionnaires from 107 pupils and 47 staff. We also considered 89 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and one telephone call from a parent.