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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr L. Magee
Principal
Wye School
Olantigh Road
Wye
Kent
TN25 5EJ

Dear Mr Magee

Short inspection of Wye School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 2018 with Ian Bauckham, 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 June 2015.

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 at Easter 2018, following a period of considerable flux in senior leadership, you have developed a firm knowledge of your school's strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement. Your determination to provide the best standard of education for each pupil is clear. You are well supported in this by the regional director of the United Learning multi-academy trust, your leadership team, your staff and the governing body. You have accurately evaluated and identified areas of recent underperformance. As a result, with the support of the governors and the multi-academy trust, you have introduced and continue to take appropriate actions to bring about improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have established a strongly positive culture of safeguarding that runs throughout the school, ensuring that pupils are safe and secure. Leaders have put in place effective systems and procedures that meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. For example, the record of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with young people is both accurate and compliant with requirements. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Your leaders and staff promote the importance of good mental health among pupils. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school, and this confidence is supported by the views of parents and carers. As

one parent commented, 'Both of my children are happy at Wye School.' Professional relationships with a range of external agencies are effective.

You, as the designated safeguarding lead, are well supported by two deputies in the fulfilment of your responsibilities concerning the welfare of pupils. Training of staff and governors is both comprehensive and regular, and includes training relating to any changes in safeguarding practices, including on child protection, as required. Procedures related to the recruitment of staff are thorough, because leaders and governors have been appropriately trained in safer recruitment. New staff that join the school mid-year receive suitable safeguarding training as part of their induction to the school. As a result, all staff know the signs to look out for that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm and are confident in what action to take when necessary to support vulnerable pupils.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three areas of focus. The first of these was the consideration of how successful leaders have been in addressing the areas for improvement included in the previous inspection report.
- Leaders have acted effectively to improve on those aspects identified. Evidence obtained from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of work in pupils' books during this inspection showed that learning tasks are now pitched at increasingly appropriate levels to meet the differing needs of pupils in all years. Pupils say that the majority of tasks challenge them to develop their knowledge and understanding. This has led to an improvement in progress for most pupils.
- Pupils typically demonstrate care and pride in what they do. Their work is well presented, because of increasingly high levels of expectation set by teachers. Routines are well established and consistent in the large majority of lessons. Pupils respond to this very well.
- You accepted that the previous self-evaluation and improvement planning documents needed to be improved. As a consequence, you have carried out a thorough review and have made changes so that targets are now clearer and more focused. This now enables all leaders to use the detail to plan and evaluate strategic improvement increasingly effectively.
- The second area we considered was how successfully leaders have improved progress and attainment in areas of underperformance. This was because, in 2018, the performance of pupils in these subjects at the end of key stage 4 was weak in comparison to national averages. Leaders identified that weaknesses in the quality of teaching at the time led to these disappointing outcomes.
- Leaders have swiftly addressed these weaknesses through the appointment of new teachers at the start of this academic year and the provision of focused training for teachers, including support from the multi-academy trust. This support to improve the quality of teaching and learning has included helping pupils develop subject mastery in the curriculum and, very recently, a focus on

deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding by improving teachers' questioning.

- In addition, the recent expansion in the number of senior leaders in the school has successfully increased leaders' capacity to monitor and evaluate subject area performance effectively.
- Information provided by leaders about current pupils' performance indicated that progress and attainment in these subjects are improving across all year groups.
- Finally, we considered leaders' effectiveness in improving the progress and attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils.
- Provisional figures for disadvantaged pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 in 2018 showed that, in comparison with other pupils nationally with similar starting points, they performed better in English and were close to national figures in mathematics and science. However, their progress was weaker in several other subjects. Leaders' analysis has accurately identified that those pupils who had lower levels of attainment at the end of key stage 2 made the least progress.
- Leaders have since provided additional support to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' underperformance is addressed through judicious use of pupil premium funding. For example, disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 11 are now provided with a well-considered support programme to help them achieve higher standards. In addition, subject department action plans have clear objectives to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of disadvantaged pupils' work in other year groups, indicated that current pupils are on track to make better progress than previously in these weaker subject areas.
- Leaders have noted that, in 2018, boys' progress, although good in English, mathematics, science and English Baccalaureate subjects, was weaker than that of girls in the school. Leaders are determined to reduce the difference in progress and attainment between the two groups and have introduced different support strategies for boys, such as mentoring and earlier identification of weaker progress. Indications from inspection evidence are that these recent developments are improving boys' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning are fully implemented and regularly evaluated in order to secure consistently high standards
- the recently implemented support strategies lead to continued improvements in boys' and disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Powell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you at the start of the day and we discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas the inspectors would focus on during the inspection. During the day, inspectors held further discussions with you, your senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils.

Inspectors, accompanied by you and your senior leaders, visited 18 lessons. In addition, a selection of pupils' work was scrutinised jointly with school leaders. Inspectors took account of 86 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and considered written comments from 82 parents. Inspectors also considered 31 staff responses, and zero responses from pupils on the online questionnaires. Inspectors met with pupils in key stages 3 and 4. In addition, we analysed a wide range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour information, minutes of governors' meetings, and safeguarding policies and procedures.