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Mr Chris Hunt
Principal
Westfield Academy
Stiby Road
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Dear Mr Hunt

Short inspection of Westfield Academy

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2018 with Non Davies, 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 September 2014.

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 continued to provide strong leadership and clear guidance. You have been supported well by members of the governing body and your senior leaders.

At the previous inspection you were asked to raise achievement further. You have developed your performance management system and closely aligned this with your staff training programme. As a result, the progress of pupils in several subjects has improved. Leaders, at all levels, have improved assessment across the school. Teachers follow the system and pupils are clear about how to improve their work. You have acted swiftly to improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that teaching is now strong in the vast majority of subjects.

You have worked with members of the governing body, in particular the chair of governors, to develop the school so that it is at the heart of the community it serves. However, you recognise that there is more to do to help parents and carers to understand the importance of their children attending school regularly.

You and your leaders have developed a positive culture at the school. Expectations of pupils are high and the great majority of pupils respond positively to this. You have ensured that teachers maintain a focus on improving pupils' reading skills and developing their study habits. This has been largely successful.

Pupils are welcoming to visitors and keen to emphasise the strong support and encouragement they receive from their teachers. They commented on the increased opportunities for them to stay at school after normal school hours to study and partake in enrichment opportunities. As a result, the culture of the school is one where opportunities are taken and the importance of achieving well is valued among pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Detailed checks are made to ensure that all employees, volunteers and visitors to the school are suitable to work with children. Precise and accurate records are kept and these meet statutory requirements. All members of staff receive appropriate and regular training on matters of safeguarding and they are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Staff and pupils know how to report any matters which concern them. The recently introduced system for recording such concerns ensures that communication within school and with outside agencies is detailed and timely. The dedicated staff who work to support pupils who experience difficulties are passionate about their role and extremely knowledgeable. Consequently, they ensure that any specialist support is available swiftly.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, also expressed the view that their children are happy and safe. Around the school, pupils are polite to one another and to adults. Pupils spoke of the mutual respect that exists between staff and pupils. Pupils who met inspectors stated that bullying is rare and that any reported incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Records kept by the school show that incidents of bullying and discrimination are not common and are dealt with in line with the school policies.

Inspection findings

- In the last few years, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as their peers and other pupils nationally. You have invested the additional funding received in a range of strategies to ensure that members of staff are aware of the individual barriers these pupils face. Pupils benefit from the work of house leaders and other specialist staff, who ensure that they are able to access the education on offer through careful guidance and strong pastoral support.
- Disadvantaged pupils also benefit from the provision of portable computers, ensuring that all pupils have access to digital media and learning resources. In addition, you use targeted funding to provide music tuition, additional careers advice and transport so that disadvantaged pupils can attend extra-curricular events. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school has increased rapidly and pupils are well prepared for their next steps. In 2016/17, all Year 11 pupils secured places in further education or employment.
- You have been very strong in leading the school's approach to providing a supportive education for all pupils. Senior leaders work with staff to monitor

pupils' progress regularly using the school's assessment and data systems. This enables teachers to plan learning that meets each individual pupil's needs. As a result, teaching in lessons focuses on developing knowledge and understanding specific to individual pupils. The consequence of this is that pupils have made increased progress across several subjects.

- Following a strategic review by senior leaders and governors, you identified that the curriculum was not providing opportunities for pupils to make strong progress. This potentially places pupils, particularly those of middle and high ability, at a disadvantage. You recognised that the range of courses available to key stage 4 pupils was not sufficiently varied to cater for their interests. You and your leadership team have reformed the curriculum to ensure that pupils can select from a wider range of subjects. In addition, to support this increase in curriculum offer, you have modified school buildings to provide new sports and drama facilities. You have also built a recording studio to support music. Pupils are enthusiastic about these changes, are motivated by them and value the opportunities they present. However, the overall rate of progress that pupils make remains below the level seen typically nationally.
- You also provide many opportunities for pupils to expand and extend their learning through after-school support clubs. You encourage pupils' attendance at these through rewards as well as by providing transport. These contribute to the rich experiences that pupils can engage in and have helped to encourage pupils' overall attendance. Your leaders recognise that working with parents and carers to increase attendance for all pupils is vital to ensure that more pupils make good progress in future.
- Pupils' attendance has been below the national average for the last three academic years. Persistent absenteeism is significantly higher than levels seen typically nationally. Leaders have invested heavily in strategies to improve pupils' attendance. These are having significant success. Attendance for the current academic year has improved and is now only slightly below the national rate. Parents and carers are supported in helping their children to attend regularly, although a few do not cooperate fully to ensure this for their children.
- The high number of pupils with anxiety and medical needs has a negative impact on attendance figures. Senior leaders work closely and effectively with external agencies, including health services, education welfare and children's social care, to support pupils and ensure that actions are followed up. Leaders' careful monitoring of pupils' welfare ensures that action is taken swiftly to support pupils so that they attend more regularly and make good progress. Improving the attendance of pupils remains an area of focus for the school.
- In the previous academic year, the number of fixed-term exclusions for pupils was above national figures for other schools. This was as a result of a number of pupils not being able to deal with the expectations of the school. This academic year, your on-site facility for pupils who are not behaving in line with expectation, 'Return2Learn', is effective in supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. The individualised nature of this support results in a vast improvement in behaviour, with 95% of pupils having returned to lessons and increased the

number of positive rewards received. This has also resulted in a reduction in exclusions.

- The vast majority of pupils behave well. In lessons, they are attentive and show good attitudes towards their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils continue to make accelerated progress so that they achieve as well as other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4
- they work with parents further, engaging them in their children's learning and ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Shanks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we spoke with you, other leaders and with members of the governing body. We looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with them about their progress. We visited lessons across year groups to observe learning in a range of subjects. Informal discussions were held with pupils around the school at break and lunchtime, as well as in lessons. We also held formal meetings with a small group of pupils from Years 7, 8 and 10 to discuss their learning experiences. Documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding and attendance, was considered. The school's evaluation documents, training programmes and improvement plans were also scrutinised. We looked at examples of the school's systems to track pupils' progress. We took into account 77 responses to Parent View, 59 responses to the staff survey and the 456 responses to the pupil survey. One of us held a telephone conversation with a parent.