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10 February 2016

Mr S Woods
Upper Shirley High School
Bellemoor Road
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Southampton
Hampshire
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Dear Mr Woods

Short inspection of Upper Shirley High School

Following my visit to your academy on 26 January 2016 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

- You and your senior team and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the academy since the last inspection.
- You demonstrate great ambition for this academy and for the quality of its work for pupils and their families.
- You and your team have developed a wide range of ways of monitoring achievement and the quality of teaching and you use the information obtained to drive improvements successfully.
- The academy benefits from being part of a local multi-academy trust. You particularly value the close links this gives the academy with its community.
- Governance is strong. Governors hold you and your senior team to account for driving improvements quickly and successfully.
- There is a good emphasis on developing the quality of teaching throughout the academy. Learning is promoted strongly although the 'Habits of Mind' strategies are not emphasised consistently.
- Pupils' progress in many subjects is good. It is less secure in science but you are taking steps to remedy this.
- There is a good emphasis on developing literacy in the academy and this is improving standards of reading and writing and encouraging more pupils to read for pleasure.
- Pupils with additional learning or welfare needs are looked after well and their learning is supported effectively.

- Pupils are making better progress in the academy. Gaps between the achievements of those eligible for the pupil premium and others have been quite wide in recent years but are closing now. Disadvantaged pupils are attending better but improvements are needed to match their attendance with that of other pupils here.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff place an appropriately very high emphasis on pupils' safety and welfare. Policies and guidelines on all relevant aspects of safeguarding are in place and they give a very clear steer to the good practice in the academy. All adults who work with pupils are checked appropriately, whether they are employed by the academy or not. Training in safeguarding is regular and of good quality. Weekly meetings of all key staff and other agencies are held to discuss pupils of concern and to review the impact of actions already taken; interventions are timely and effective.

The academy has a very good level of awareness about the 'Prevent' programme to stop people being drawn into extremism and being radicalised, and other risks to young people such as child sexual exploitation. Pupils feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns.

Inspection findings

You are very ambitious for the success of pupils and staff here and you drive improvement strongly and securely. You are supported in this by a strong senior team and effective middle leaders. 'Learning without Limits' is the clear message, and the expectation of all.

Strong systems are in place to keep you and other leaders closely informed about the quality of all aspects of the academy's work. There is regular monitor and evaluation of pupils' achievements through the mechanism you call 'The Rhythm'. This information is used well to determine future priorities and any need for immediate responses to underachievement.

You and your senior team regard the management of the quality of teaching as central to your work. There is a wide range of strategies in place to improve the teaching skills of groups of teachers and individuals, which are well tailored to their particular needs. The accent on 'Habits of Mind', which define specific learning strategies, is a useful framework for both teaching and learning but it would benefit from more being made more explicit and given a higher status in some classrooms.

The academy works very productively with the Jefferys Education Trust, the multi-academy trust of which it is a member. It receives good levels of challenge and support, including consultancy support in mathematics and science and an external validation of the quality of its work through review visits. There are few links with

the local authority but you are appreciative of the external verification of the quality of work in the academy provided by their annual visits.

The governance of the academy is strong and offers significant and well-focused challenge to you and your senior team on specific aspects of your work. It is well informed by regular reports from you, reviews conducted by the trust and by external consultants. A governor has recently been appointed with specific expertise in the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and she is beginning to make a contribution to this aspect of the academy's work.

Improvements evident in outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015 are continuing. There are no real differences between the progress made by pupils of different abilities, nor between boys and girls, within the academy. The quality of learning in English is particularly good. Pupils also learn well in mathematics and their progress is improving. Pupils' achievements in science are less strong. The support of the trust has assisted you to strengthen the quality of teaching in this subject. This, and plans in place to strengthen the leadership of this department, and the recent reorganisation of pupils' subject choices, are giving it the capacity to raise standards. Achievement in science in Key Stage 4 is currently rising as a consequence. Pupils' achievement in some other subjects remains good, with significant strengths in film studies and performing and visual arts subjects, physical education, geography and catering. Improvements in learning in modern foreign languages and information technology are evident as teaching improves.

Good teaching continues to support pupils' good progress in many subjects. As a result pupils are confident and interested in learning and they enjoy most lessons. Particular strengths include the quality of feedback offered to pupils on their work and good questioning which probes understanding and ensures its security. Work is often adapted to meet the needs of different groups of learners. For example, in a Year 10 Italian lesson one pupil was seen doing work at A level standard. Pupils feel challenged and stretched and say that many of their teachers are ambitious for them. This inculcates positive attitudes to learning and to examination success. All pupils are aware of their target grades and use this information to steer their learning. Not all work in books reflects a sense of pride in their work however; some books are untidy and some work can be poorly presented.

There are positive attitudes to developing literacy in the academy. Many subjects support literacy through effective displays of key words and reinforcing key vocabulary to support understanding. The DEAR (drop everything and read) strategy and the accelerated reading programme, along with the reward badges that pupils wear with such pride, are being successful. The library is used well at lunchtimes: two groups of pupils were busily involved in the Carnegie Award shadowing scheme on the day of the visit. 'Words I love to spell' is a regular feature of the website and this sends a clear message that the academy means business on literacy.

Gaps between the achievements of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others are closing but the extent of some is still an issue. Disadvantaged pupils are currently making better progress than previously. The stronger progress being made by this group in Year 11 points to their achieving grades more in line with others in 2016 than has been the case recently. Many disadvantaged pupils benefit from their work on the accelerated reading programme. Gains in literacy for pupils supported in this way are tracked with particular care and many are bought books in order to stimulate their joy in reading.

The attendance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is increasing faster than that of others but more remains to be done to secure good levels of attendance of these groups. Exclusions are reducing as a result of the development of good-quality provision in the academy. This operates on the principles of restorative justice in the same way as do all other aspects of pupil support.

The Endeavour Centre offers a wide range of good support for pupils with particular learning needs. This includes provision for English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those who would benefit from life coaching or 'time out' and some who receive emotional literacy support.

Behaviour around the site is lively but pupils are welcoming and friendly and many are proud of their academy. Some shirts are untucked but the uniform is liked and worn quite smartly by many.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- gaps in the achievements between those eligible for the pupil premium and others are closed securely in all subjects
- the quality of pupils' learning in science is brought up to the good standard evident in many other subject areas
- all pupils take a pride in the presentation of their written work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Southampton City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two inspectors visited the academy for one day. There were meetings with you and your senior team, governors, pupils and a representative of the trust. Policies around safeguarding, reports from the trust and the local authority, your own analyses of pupils' achievements and other documents were scrutinised. Inspectors made brief visits to 19 lessons to see teaching and learning. They paid particular attention to the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the achievement of all pupils in science. Responses to Parent View and questionnaires from pupils and staff were analysed.