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Mr Chris Wade
Principal
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Dear Mr Wade

Short inspection of Huish Episcopi Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2017 with Richard Butler and Terence Fish, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since taking up your post in September 2017, you have had a positive impact on the school and you have identified the changes necessary to ensure that improvements take place more rapidly. You provide strong and confident leadership and a clear sense of direction. You have the full support of the staff and you are assisted by a strong leadership team. A culture of ambition and aspiration is developing in the school, which is helping to improve outcomes for pupils and students. Governors are well informed and provide you with a good balance of support and challenge.

Your self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. You precisely assess what is working well and those areas of the school that need to be strengthened. You have quickly and clearly identified the priorities for the school and have already put in place the required actions. You have also identified a range of strategies aimed at bringing about further improvements.

The majority of current pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils have reduced. You acknowledge, however,

that you have more work to do to ensure that you help the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to achieve at the very highest levels.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to raise students' aspirations in the sixth form and you are aware that this is still an issue for the school. Students are not consistently challenged to reach the highest grades. The previous report also called for the overall quality of teaching to be improved and this has taken place. There is now greater consistency of good practice across the school and plans are in place to continue to raise standards where the progress of pupils is less than good.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong commitment to the safety of pupils and students. Governors and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date, meet requirements and are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of good quality. Staff and governors are well trained and kept up to date by the leadership team.

The majority of parents believe that the school keeps their children safe and cares for them well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk confidently about what to do and who to talk to if they have any concerns about bullying or other issues. Staff ensure that pupils are aware of any potential risks to their safety. Consequently, pupils know how to avoid these risks. The 'Student Guidance and Learning Centre' makes a strong contribution to the safety and welfare of the most vulnerable students.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry for the inspectors was the progress made by pupils in all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. Pupils make good progress in most subjects. Attainment is good in English, mathematics and science. There is a strong focus on improving literacy and numeracy and pupils are aware of the importance of these basic skills. In a very small number of subjects, pupils' progress and attainment are not good enough but you and your team have comprehensive plans to bring about improvements.
- Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils and students are challenged more consistently so that aspirations are raised. Pupils learn quickly when teachers have high expectations and work hard to meet their individual needs. Where progress is stronger, teachers' feedback helps pupils progress more quickly and pupils of all abilities have access to a range of resources to support their learning. Leaders are aware of the need to ensure that teachers share good practice more regularly with each other.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Classrooms are well ordered and pupils are keen to take part in activities. Carefully designed classroom displays help to create a stimulating working environment. Low-level disruption is minimal and pupils behave well both in class and around the school.

- Pupils are encouraged to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which the school offers and events such as the Wednesday lunchtime concerts help to create a vibrant and positive culture.
- The second line of enquiry considered the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The progress of current disadvantaged pupils is good. The school has relatively new systems in place which are yet to have a measurable impact on outcomes, but work seen in pupils' books demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils are working well and on course to meet or exceed their attainment targets.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent efficiently. They make sure that barriers to pupils' progress are eliminated and that they have the same opportunities as other pupils. However, the achievements of pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up are not measured effectively so that they are able to make more rapid progress. The attendance of disadvantaged students is good and in line with that of other pupils.
- Inspectors also considered how effectively leaders are developing the quality of teaching across the school. You and your leadership team are rightly focused on ensuring that pupils experience good teaching in every lesson. Highly organised systems for monitoring and training are now in place and are used to promote improving outcomes for pupils.
- Inspectors' final line of enquiry looked at the progress made by students in the sixth form. Teaching in the sixth form is now generally good but, in some areas, teachers' expectations of students are too low. This is reflected in students' attainment and the choices they make when moving on to the next stages of their education, employment or training. Students are very positive about their experience of life in the sixth form but leaders do not ensure that the personal development curriculum is covered fully. Key topics are introduced in assemblies and tutor times but leaders do not ensure that coverage is monitored closely enough. All sixth-form students take part in work experience and they have access to high-quality independent careers advice. Those students who retake GCSE English and mathematics do well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems already in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning are applied more consistently across the school and best practice is shared more effectively
- there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form so that students are challenged more regularly and their aspirations raised.

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

Richard Steward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, your senior team and governors. We talked to pupils and students, both formally in groups and around the school. We visited lessons with you and your team to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including on safeguarding, attendance and the use of pupil premium funding. We took account of 132 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 131 written comments from parents. We also looked at the 103 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 123 responses to the pupil survey.