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Ms Paula Humphreys
Headteacher
The Broxbourne School
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Dear Ms Humphreys

Short inspection of The Broxbourne School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 2017 with Sean Powell, Ofsted Inspector, and Alison Dominey, 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 November 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 are ambitious for pupils and have high expectations of them. Consequently, you do your utmost to ensure that all pupils are well supported to meet the challenging targets you set.

Your evaluation of the school's performance is accurate. You know which areas need to be improved to make the education you provide even better. You act on what your evaluation tells you to ensure that standards continue to rise. For example, you recognised that there were gaps in the tracking of pupils' progress through key stage 3. You developed a role within the staffing structure to address this. As a consequence, you now receive high-quality information about the progress that pupils make during Years 7, 8 and 9. This allows you to provide additional help to pupils when they fall behind and supports the good progress that pupils make across the school.

You are justly proud of the success of pupils in the English Baccalaureate. A far higher proportion of pupils at The Broxbourne School complete the qualifications necessary to achieve the English Baccalaureate than is typical nationally. Pupils' progress in the English Baccalaureate element of the Progress 8 measure is well above average. This reflects the high expectations you have for pupils, and is indicative of the good quality of teaching they receive.

You have developed a strong and effective partnership with the governing body. They rightly value the positive impact you have on the education and well-being of pupils. Governors support and challenge leaders well. You and other leaders work openly with governors. Governors are not afraid to question what you tell them and, as a consequence, know which aspects of the school are working particularly well and which need further development. Governors make valuable contributions to improvement planning and are integral to the ongoing success of the school.

Parents appreciate the work that you do for their children. A large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, say that their children are happy at the school. They agree with the view of inspectors that pupils are well taught and make good progress. Many parents commented positively on the support and encouragement their children receive as pupils of the school. One parent accurately observed: 'Despite its success, the school continues to strive for improvement.'

A large number of pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey say that they enjoy learning at the school. They feel that teachers help them to do their best. Many pupils frequently take part in school activities outside lessons. Pupils who spoke with inspectors supported the view that these enrichment activities are a positive aspect of the school. Pupils value their time at school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. The checks made when staff are recruited are thorough and ensure that adults in the school are suitable to work with children. Concerns about the well-being of pupils are well documented and centrally recorded. Staff with responsibility for the safeguarding arrangements review any concerns that have been logged about individual pupils and take appropriate and timely action to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff are vigilant in pursuing the support that pupils need.

Pupils have a good understanding of the risks in modern society, such as online safety and from extremist views. They know whom to talk to if they are concerned about themselves or about other pupils. Pupils are encouraged to treat everyone equally. They report that bullying is rare and, where it does happen, is well dealt with. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, and they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remains good was about how well leaders identify and overcome the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils. This is because disadvantaged pupils at the school in the past have made progress broadly in line with other pupils nationally, but have not made the same high levels of progress as other pupils in the school.
- Inspectors found that disadvantaged pupils are being well supported to make good progress. In history and geography, disadvantaged pupils are provided with revision guides and encouraged to attend extra revision sessions. In

mathematics, sixth-form tutors support a range of pupils, and especially disadvantaged pupils. The breakfast club helps disadvantaged pupils to be ready to learn, and enhanced access to trips and visits has increased their engagement with school. As a consequence, the progress that disadvantaged pupils make is increasing.

- While looking into the progress that disadvantaged pupils make, inspectors found that some teachers do not always adapt their teaching precisely to meet the needs of the range of pupils in their classes. As a result, pupils sometimes complete work that does not demand the most from them.
- My second line of enquiry related to the progress of boys. Over time, boys have made progress in line with, or better than, other boys nationally. However, at key stage 4, boys have not achieved the same very high levels of progress as girls at the school.
- You correctly identified the progress of boys in your improvement planning and have begun to implement effective strategies to support boys more with their learning. Seating plans, targeted questioning, focused support and an increased emphasis on celebrating boys' successes are all beginning to have a positive impact on the progress that boys make. In key stage 4 mathematics, for example, boys and girls currently in the school are making broadly equivalent progress to each other.
- You recognise that your new strategies have not yet removed the differences between the progress rates of boys and girls in different subjects and in different year groups. You remain committed to ensuring that boys achieve even more highly so that their outcomes are in line with those of girls. You have suitable plans in place to achieve this.
- My third line of enquiry was about the teaching of mathematics. In 2016 and in 2017, pupils made broadly average progress in mathematics between joining the school and completing key stage 4. In contrast, in a range of other subjects, such as English and the English Baccalaureate subjects, pupils made strong progress.
- Your insightful adjustment to 'setting' has successfully improved the motivation and engagement of pupils who find mathematics difficult. Pupils are resilient, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and understand that they can do well. They are well supported by teachers who have good subject knowledge.
- Leaders have identified which areas of mathematics pupils have struggled with in the past. They have adjusted what pupils are taught in light of this. As a consequence, pupils have a better understanding of key elements of mathematics such as mental arithmetic and problem-solving.
- Leaders have carefully considered how to help groups of pupils to make good progress in mathematics. For example, leaders have put pupils into different groups in Year 11 to ensure that their learning styles are accommodated. This has enhanced the progress that they make.
- Because of clear leadership and effective teaching, the progress of pupils currently in the school in mathematics is better than that of pupils in 2016 and 2017. Pupils now make good progress in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop and use strategies which motivate boys in their learning so that their good progress continues to improve
- the good teaching in the school becomes even better by all teachers consistently identifying and meeting the precise needs of the range of pupils in their classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Andy Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you, other leaders, members of staff and five governors. Inspectors met with pupils and visited lessons, sometimes accompanied by a leader.

Inspectors looked at performance information and reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, governance and analysis of spending.

Inspectors considered 169 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 264 responses to the pupil survey and 22 responses to the staff survey.