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Mr Nick Lewis
Fairfield High School
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Dear Mr Lewis

Short inspection of Fairfield High School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017 with Martin Watson, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 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 and the executive principal have established a very harmonious and inclusive school. You serve a rich and culturally diverse population, with over 40 nationalities represented within the pupil cohort. Pupils respect and value the knowledge they gain from this. You have expanded the opportunities for pupils and have made productive links with large local businesses. Pupils gain work experience and apprenticeships because of these.

Since February 2015, you have been part of Excalibur Trust. This has added further openings for staff and pupils. Other secondary trust schools are in Wiltshire, West Berkshire and Swindon. They offer different educational prospects and serve varying rural and urban populations. Staff have gained from sharing best practice as both trainers and receivers. This benefits the pupils. Many recent improvements are a direct result of the trust. The trust is ably overseen by the chief executive officer.

Following the previous inspection, you have secured significant improvements in science. This is, now, a highly effective department. There were two groups of pupils taking triple science in the end of key stage 4 examinations. Pupils taking chemistry and additional science achieved a 100% success rate in grades A* to C in GCSEs. Physics and biology achieved a 98% success rate in grades A* to C. Pupils

spoke of the good teaching in this area. They knew they were making valuable progress.

There has been, and continues to be, a concerted focus on teaching. The leader for teaching and learning took up post two years ago. She has improved the checking systems for monitoring teaching and learning. The systems for managing the performance of teachers have secure targets. Training supports the expectations within these. There are purposeful links between appraisal and training that lead to good teaching.

Questioning of pupils by teachers has improved since the last inspection. For instance, teachers of English use probing questions. They elicit important information about texts, such as Shakespeare's Othello. Teachers are skilful at linking these historical texts to ongoing social problems, such as deceit and resentment. Pupils articulate their thinking and share views on these well. Oracy is a valuable tool within teaching. Modern foreign language teachers use the target language frequently within lessons. As a result, pupils, including those in Years 7 and 8, are speaking more fluently in foreign languages and are acquiring good accents.

Recently, you have amended the marking and feedback policy. The impact of this is variable. Some teachers are using it well. Too many are setting next steps but not checking on the progress pupils make with these. You know that this is an area for further development.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are of a high quality and detailed. Staff receive training on how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of radicalisation and extremism. The designated safeguarding leads work closely with heads of year and welfare officers. This is important because of the high numbers of pupils with complex needs. Collectively, you make sure pupils are safe and secure in school. You work determinedly, yet sensitively, with pupils, parents and external agencies to monitor and support the most vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and rooted in the school's culture.

Inspection findings

- We discussed the progress of the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils. These groups of pupils are performing in line with pupils of similar ability nationally. However, they are not doing as well as middle- and low-ability pupils. You have raised pupils' aspirations. You hold breakfast clubs for pupils gifted at English and history. Pupils work together and discuss prospective A-level questions and work. Pupils identify with others who are like-minded and intellectually curious in these subjects. You provide inspiration for the most able disadvantaged pupils by working with universities. The partnership supports pupils considering higher education. Equally, local legal firms have provided work experience opportunities for the most able disadvantaged pupils. These provide

positive experiences. Although you agree that consistent challenge in lessons is a must, this is not yet happening regularly.

- The disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making good progress. This is a positive shift since the end of key stage 4 examinations in 2016. You have made sure disadvantaged pupils experience everything that the school has to offer. This has given them confidence. Pupils are keen to succeed. Teachers know who they are and their needs. In the end of key stage 4 examinations in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made more progress overall and in English and EBacc subjects than others in the school. The only area in which they did not achieve as well as others was in mathematics. Even so, their progress was in line with that of others nationally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve well, too. The SEN coordinator knows the pupils well. Having identified their specific needs, he shares this information with teachers. Pupils have a 'passport' which explains their learning preferences. This provides accurate details about how to teach these pupils. Teachers check the progress of these pupils and the disadvantaged pupils closely.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved. You introduced a new policy in 2016. You have appointed extra staff to track the attendance of pupils. Staff visit families and support them in making sure pupils attend regularly. They inform parents of the implications of taking pupils out of school during term time. Individual cases of poor attendance are better understood by all involved. Previously, attendance for these pupils was significantly below the national average. Now, it is closer to the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new policies for teaching and learning are checked carefully and embedded securely to ensure consistency in teaching
- most able and most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged regularly and provided with opportunities for problem-solving and developing extended writing
- support and challenge in pupils' learning is timely and maximises progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I and the Ofsted Inspector met with you, senior leaders, the SEN coordinator, the chief executive officer of the trust and governors. The Ofsted Inspector spoke formally with a group of pupils. We spoke informally with them around the site. We visited lessons in English, humanities, modern foreign languages and mathematics. We looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books and considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. We took into account 143 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 105 comments written by parents, the 65 staff responses and the two pupil ones. In addition, we considered letters received from parents.