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Miss Christine Oates
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Oates

Short inspection of Cirencester Kingshill School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2017 with Paul Nicholson, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your leadership has created a school that pupils, parents and staff all agree is welcoming and supportive. Pupils enjoy coming to school; they behave well and act responsibly around the school site and in lessons.

In recent years, pupils have achieved well and made stronger progress from their starting points at your school than at the majority of other schools across the country. However, in 2016 this pattern was broken and outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 11 were not as strong. You and your senior colleagues have taken action to ensure that this year pupils will once again make the progress that you and the community have come to expect. As a result, the quality of work in books and current levels of achievement indicate that pupils are now making the progress of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across a broad range of subjects and year groups. Teachers are encouraged to develop and trial different feedback models in order to help pupils understand with confidence exactly what and how to improve. Pupils appreciate the high-quality feedback they receive from most, but not all, teachers. They are confident that it helps them improve their work. This is an area that the school is still working on so that pupil achievement is maximised.

You have nurtured a culture among school leaders where they feel able to freely contribute ideas to improve the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders are now focused and committed as a result. When we met, we discussed your keenness to further develop the shared sense of ownership and the work of other leaders across the school. Currently, not all planned actions for school improvement are implemented consistently across all areas of the school.

The trust board is knowledgeable and experienced. Trustees hold you and your colleagues to account well. They are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for your pupils. They ask suitably challenging questions of you and have played a key role in focusing the school on improving teaching, learning and assessment in departments where they can see underperformance.

Last year, disadvantaged pupils did not make sufficient progress and so fell behind other pupils. You have reacted by putting in place a wide-ranging plan to address the issue, using pupil premium funding wisely. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that current pupils are now making better progress. Year 11 pupils, in particular, told me that they are very appreciative of the school's efforts to support them in the run-up to their examinations in the summer.

You have put comprehensive provision in place to support the welfare needs of your pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that those pupils with education, health and care plans are given the pastoral support they need. You and the senior team have identified that this group of pupils do not make the academic progress they are capable of. You and your team are working well with teachers to secure higher expectations and improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress improves.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made safeguarding a real strength of the school. Staff are appropriately trained, records are well maintained and recruitment procedures are undertaken assiduously. Senior colleagues work well with governors to monitor the effectiveness of systems to keep pupils safe.

As a result, pupils feel safe and they know what to do and who to go to if they have concerns. They are confident that staff will protect and guide them should the need arise. The school has an impressive record in acting as an advocate for vulnerable pupils when working with local authority partners, ensuring they receive the support they need.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the specific areas that this inspection would focus on. Firstly, we would explore how well leaders and governors are meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up. We also

agreed to explore how effectively you are ensuring that outcomes for current pupils are stronger than those seen in 2016, which were weaker than in previous years.

- In previous years, school leaders and governors have concentrated too heavily on attainment when judging performance, particularly GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics figures. The dip in pupils' outcomes in 2016 led to significant changes in leaders' practice. School leaders at all levels are now focused on ensuring that pupils' progress is maximised regardless of background.
- The headteacher puts an emphasis on the importance of high-quality middle leadership and has proved robust in addressing underperformance.
- Senior leaders work closely with the middle leaders they line manage to ensure a tight focus on raising achievement for all pupils. Middle leaders have clear targets and these are closely monitored by senior staff on a regular basis. This has resulted in an increased emphasis on ensuring that pupils do as well as they can.
- Your pupil premium strategy has re-energised and refocused staff commitment to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils this year. In previous years, a significant amount of resources went into supporting the pastoral and emotional health needs of a small group of pupils. While this was entirely appropriate, it did not, on its own, lead to improved outcomes for these pupils. A focus on learning was also required.
- The current work to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is already having a positive impact on the progress that this group of pupils is making. Pupils value the work of the 'learning adviser' who works alongside them and helps them devise revision plans and prioritise their work. This work, when set alongside the improvements in teaching, is making a significant difference to pupils' levels of confidence so that they are better able to reach higher standards in their work.
- Additional funds allocated in order to allow those Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their peers are well used. These pupils are now making good progress. There is a good programme in place and the progress this group of pupils is making is improving.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not yet make as much progress as other pupils nationally. They are well cared for but there is not the same strategic focus on improving outcomes for these pupils as there is for disadvantaged pupils. Expectations of what pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can achieve with the support available are sometimes too low. The individual plans that have been written for pupils to help teachers provide appropriate work for them are not always followed. As a result, these pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that strategies to further improve the academic progress of this group are fully embedded into the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a whole-school strategic approach to increasing the academic progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- school improvement initiatives are implemented consistently across the school by all senior and middle leaders.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, Ofsted inspector Paul Nicholson and I met with you, senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils. We visited lessons 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 safeguarding, attendance and the use of the pupil premium grant. We took into account 96 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 63 written comments by parents and responses to questionnaires completed by 58 pupils and 49 staff.