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Miss Julia Maunder
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Dear Miss Maunder

Short inspection of Thomas Keble School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 2017 with Gill Hickling, 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 2014.

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 demonstrating strong leadership and you are supported well by an effective leadership team, which has helped you to develop an inclusive culture at the school. Your vision of supporting pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities is shared by staff. This is a strength of the school. You have introduced new target setting and assessment processes. These are raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. You are committed to the professional development of staff at all levels. Middle leaders, in particular, are offered good opportunities to take on new responsibilities and so enhance their leadership skills.

Staff know pupils well and provide them with support that is appropriate to their individual learning and emotional needs. Relationships between teachers and pupils are characterised by trust and respect and this results in good behaviour. Pupils are engaged in lessons and their conduct around the site at break and lunchtimes is orderly and amenable. Pupils appreciate the opportunities the school offers them to take on leadership roles. They enjoy many cultural and sporting extra-curricular activities, for example taking part in the Christmas show. These activities help to build pupils' confidence. Pupils' progress across a range of subjects is in line with national averages; however, progress in GCSE English is well above average. A higher proportion of pupils than seen nationally attain a grade 5 or above in both GCSE English and mathematics. Pupils are, therefore, well placed to make a success

of the next stage of their education. The proportion of pupils who secure places in education or training when they leave Year 11 is above average.

Since the previous inspection, you have successfully addressed the need for teaching to make sure that pupils follow the advice given to them by their teachers. You have introduced a policy on written feedback to pupils, which all teachers now follow.

Although pupils make secure progress in most subjects, there are some areas where teaching is weaker and, consequently, pupils' progress is not as strong. You are ambitious to improve pupils' achievement by ensuring that teaching is consistently effective across all subjects. You have correctly identified stretch and challenge for the most able pupils as one of your priorities to improve the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have introduced a new assessment and target-setting process, which is helping this group of pupils to make better progress.

While disadvantaged pupils' progress was too slow last year, the progress of this group of pupils has improved this year. However, there is scope to support these pupils further, and so ensure that pupil premium funding has a greater impact on their progress. Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to improve the least able pupils' reading and writing skills when they join the school. Pupils' basic skills are developed well in key stage 3, but some pupils' writing skills in key stage 4 are not yet good enough to convey complex ideas.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Policies and practices reflect the latest guidance. Staff who have specific responsibilities for safeguarding are clear about their roles. You ensure that staff and governors understand and act on clear procedures if they have a concern about any pupil's welfare. When necessary, you make timely referrals to external agencies to secure extra help.

You have created an open atmosphere in the school so that safeguarding issues are discussed honestly. As a result, pupils are confident, safe and feel well cared for. As well as showing respect to their teachers, pupils also show respect to each other. The great majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, believe that their child is safe and taught well. Parents recognise that bullying, in any form, is rare at school. This is confirmed by pupils. They explained to inspectors that if bullying does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers.

Inspection findings

- Governors are committed and suitably skilled. They have links to individual subjects, and so have a good understanding of particular areas within the school. Because they know the school well, governors are able to provide a suitable level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

- To decide if the school remained good, one of the key lines of enquiry during this inspection centred on the leadership of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Pupils' progress measured across eight GCSE subjects was around the national average in 2017, but with particular strengths in GCSE English, geography, physical education, religious education and art. Senior leaders have recently improved the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. They focus on particular aspects of teaching and so ensure that monitoring, and subsequent professional development training, is aligned with the school's development priorities. This is leading to greater consistency in teaching across the school, although you recognise there is still more to do to ensure that teaching is at least good in all subjects.
- A second key line of enquiry concerned the progress of the most able pupils. Last year, the progress of this group of pupils was not as strong as it previously had been. Pupils now have a clear understanding of their academic targets following the introduction of a new system for setting targets. Their expectations are being raised. Senior leaders are ensuring that teachers incorporate greater challenge for the most able pupils into their planning. Mathematics teaching, for example, stretches the most able pupils successfully. Teaching in science, though, is still not consistently challenging and so some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in this subject. Pupils across the school are rewarded for their determination to succeed by receiving awards recognising their resilience and independent thinking. In response to these awards, all pupils, including the most able, are being encouraged to work hard.
- A third key line of enquiry looked at the support given to disadvantaged pupils. This group of pupils did not achieve well last year. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making better progress because of the support they receive. Pastoral staff, following a restructuring of their work in September 2017, are providing timely and well-targeted support to pupils. Staff make effective links with families to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has increased as a result. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, but it is still below average when compared with the progress of other pupils nationally.
- The final key line of enquiry evaluated the progress of the least able pupils' literacy development. Pupils who join the school in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy skills are given extra help which helps them to catch up with their peers. Teachers offer these pupils a nurturing environment, often in small groups, which enables them to learn well. Information supplied by the school, and inspectors' observations, show that the least able pupils in key stage 3 are improving their reading and writing skills quickly. Pupils in key stage 4 are being asked to express themselves in writing more frequently and at greater length. Most pupils are rising to the challenge; however, some of the least able pupils still lack the skills necessary to succeed in longer written tasks.
- Parents express a high degree of satisfaction with the school and the standard of education it offers. A very high proportion of parents who responded to the Parent View online survey would recommend the school to others. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'My child has flourished at Thomas Keble. It is big

enough to give her opportunities, but small enough to notice her as an individual.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers share ideas more effectively so that they all learn from the expertise of the best
- teaching in science challenges the most able pupils more effectively
- disadvantaged pupils' progress matches or exceeds the progress of other pupils nationally
- teaching develops pupils' ability to write at length and express complex ideas.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, three governors and senior leaders. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We held a meeting with pupils from Years 10 and 11, and spoke with many other pupils informally at break and lunchtime. We made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. We looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. We scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information and information relating to attendance. We took account of responses to questionnaires from 50 staff. We considered 111 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and one phone call from a parent.