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Mr Michael Lambert
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lambert

Short inspection of The Wordsley School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2018 with Gail Peyton, 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 2015.

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 your senior leadership team provide clear and principled leadership that is appreciated by pupils, parents and carers, and staff. For example, all staff who completed their inspection questionnaire said that the school is well led. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed.

You have an ongoing focus on improving the school. Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They put in place effective plans to address weaknesses and the school is improving as a result. For example, at the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with improving teachers' use of information about pupils' prior learning when planning lessons. This aspect of teaching has improved because of well-targeted training for staff. Similarly, pupils' outcomes have improved since the previous inspection, including those of disadvantaged pupils.

There remains room for further improvement in pupils' GCSE outcomes, especially for low-attaining pupils. At times, the teaching of these pupils is not as effective as that for middle- and high-attaining pupils.

A culture of warmth, friendliness and welcome is evident throughout the school. Staff are committed to the school and all who completed their inspection questionnaire said that they are proud to work at Wordsley. Parents recognise and value the school's caring and ambitious ethos. The school is now oversubscribed with parents wanting their children to attend.

One parent summed up the views of many when they wrote in Parent View:

'This is a fantastic school. It is very well managed and all the staff are very helpful. Pupils are well behaved and always look like they are enjoying being at school. My child has come on in all aspects since joining the school.'

Another parent expressed similar sentiments when they wrote:

'The teachers have encouraged my child and given them so much confidence. As a parent, I couldn't wish for a better school for my child.'

Safeguarding is effective.

This area of the school's work is well led. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have been trained in many aspects of safeguarding and consequently, they are alert to the signs that pupils might need extra help. Leaders ensure that procedures to recruit staff safely are used well. Records relating to child protection are detailed, very well organised and stored securely.

Almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors, or who completed their inspection questionnaire, said that they feel in safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and they expressed confidence in the school's staff to deal with any that might occur. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. This is because they are regularly taught about how to protect themselves from potential dangers when using the internet and social media.

All staff who completed their inspection questionnaire and almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils are safe in school.

An area of relative weakness is the school's response to the government's 'Prevent' duty, where schools should have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.' Staff have undertaken training in this area and are aware of the general requirements of this duty. Leaders understand, and have made use of, protocols for seeking support for pupils who might be at risk. However, leaders have not carried out an assessment of the potential risks faced by pupils in the local area, as expected in the statutory guidance. Consequently, staff training and written guidance do not sufficiently explore the range of possible extremism. So, although pupils are aware that there are people who hold extreme Islamic views, they are less aware that they might be at risk from others who hold extreme far-right and/or racist views.

Inspection findings

- The first area considered during the inspection was the effectiveness of provision for low-attaining pupils, including those low-attaining pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You have ensured that these pupils receive effective support in key stage 3. They are taught by a small number of expert teachers in relatively small teaching groups and are well supported by

teaching assistants. Their curriculum focuses on improving basic skills, including reading and numeracy. These pupils make good progress as a result.

- However, their progress varies far more when taught by teachers who do not specialise in teaching pupils who find learning challenging. This is particularly the case in key stage 4, when pupils are being taught GCSE subjects. At times, teachers do not sequence and structure learning tasks well for these pupils. Consequently, pupils are sometimes unable to complete tasks because they do not have sufficient prior knowledge or understanding to do so. They therefore fail to develop a deep and secure understanding of the material they are studying.
- The inspection's second focus was on how well the curriculum meets the needs of different groups of pupils. Leaders have thoughtfully planned the school's curriculum, carefully taking into account pupils' needs and interests. Leaders' determination that pupils should be able to study subjects that interest and benefit them, but that do not qualify for inclusion in published GCSE data, has resulted in some published data measures being lower than they would otherwise be. Leaders' refusal to allow the curriculum to be determined by performance-table measures is to be commended.
- The curriculum at key stage 3 provides a broad range of subjects that prepares pupils well for their GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. During key stage 4, all pupils study an appropriate core curriculum comprising English, mathematics, science, physical education and religious education. Citizenship is taught through occasional days when the normal timetable is suspended. Additionally, pupils are carefully guided into three option subjects, depending on their interests and aptitudes. In all years, pupils enjoy their studies. Attitudes to learning are strong and pupils are keen to do well. They told inspectors that they value the support that most teachers provide.
- The inspection's next focus area was on teachers' use of information about pupils when planning lessons. This aspect of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have, at their fingertips, a variety of information about pupils' abilities and needs. Most use this well to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' abilities, especially for middle- and high-attaining pupils. However, at times, teachers' planning is not as effective at meeting the needs of low-attaining pupils.
- The final area that inspectors considered was GCSE outcomes in 2018. At the time of the inspection, in the second week of the school term, all information about GCSE results in 2018 was unvalidated and in draft form. Early indications suggest that the improvement in GCSE results seen in 2017 has been maintained in 2018. Middle-attaining pupils have achieved well, as have high-attaining pupils, although to a lesser extent. Low-attaining pupils, as in 2017, have made weaker progress than other pupils. Pupils have achieved well in several subjects including English, physics, chemistry, biology, religious education and art.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that teachers consistently structure and sequence learning for low-attaining pupils so that they develop a secure understanding of what they are studying
- strengthen pupils' understanding of the range of potential dangers they might face from people with extreme views.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, members of your senior leadership team, middle leaders and three governors. We visited several classes with senior leaders, during which we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We talked with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. We scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding and child protection records. Parents' views were considered through the 35 responses to Parent View, including the 23 free-text comments, and one written note from a parent. We also considered the 79 responses from members of staff and 99 responses from pupils to their respective online inspection questionnaires.