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Ms Sarah Price
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Dear Ms Price

Short inspection of King's School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 2018 with Anne Cullum, 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Pupils from a range of backgrounds thrive in this highly successful and inclusive school. Leaders are dedicated, determined and ambitious. Their actions ensure a very strong sense of community, where individuals really matter. A clearly understood set of values underpins the work of the school. These values provide clear direction and encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes to their learning and form strong relationships with their teachers and peers. Consequently, morale among pupils and teachers is very high. Staff feel valued and empowered. Those who met with inspectors, and/or completed the staff survey were remarkably positive about the school. All feel proud to work at the school and feel well supported in all aspects of their work. Parents and carers are also overwhelmingly positive and the school has a very high reputation in the local community. A parent's comment, that: 'The school stands out for me as a place where my children can not only learn, but grow in a safe and friendly environment,' reflected the views of many of the parents who responded to the Ofsted survey.

The school is very well led and managed. Leaders' systematic approach and attention to detail ensure that all actions are carefully considered and evaluated. This approach ensures that high standards are maintained as pupil and staff numbers considerably increase, despite the limitations imposed by the current temporary site. The trust has been instrumental in the successful development of the school. It has provided highly effective support to local governors, leaders and staff. Consequently, there is strong leadership capacity to ensure that there will be no loss of momentum when the school moves to its new site in September 2019.

Pupils value the strong relationships and the support they receive from staff. A Year 7 pupil described joining the school as 'like moving from home to home'. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other, their teachers and visitors. They are proud of their school, wear their smart uniform well and take good care of the environment. The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced. Pupils receive their entitlement to the full national curriculum in key stage 3, including the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages. The quality of teaching in languages is a particular strength, and this results in a much higher proportion of pupils entering and succeeding in the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate, than is the case nationally. A small number of pupils benefit from the opportunity to study vocational courses at local colleges, in addition to the subjects they study at the school. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is particularly impressive and these pupils make exceptional progress. Many parents expressed their appreciation of the support provided for their children to help them to overcome the barriers to learning that they face.

Leaders' actions have ensured that all of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. Pupils are now making excellent progress in most areas of the curriculum. This is reflected in the very impressive outcomes achieved by the first GCSE cohort in 2018 and in the work of current pupils. Leaders' focus on improving pupils' writing has ensured that pupils are able to achieve well in English, science and the humanities. Leaders are taking appropriate actions to ensure that pupils also learn exceptionally well in the small number of subjects, for example art, drama and computing, where achievement is not as high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Trustees and the leadership team make sure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. All staff receive appropriate training that ensures that they know how to keep pupils safe. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures, the signs to look for and how to report concerns. They monitor pupils' welfare closely, and information from case studies shows that leaders respond to concerns in a timely manner. Parents who responded to the online survey overwhelmingly agreed that their children feel safe and are well cared for in school.

Dedicated and highly skilled pastoral staff work determinedly and sensitively alongside parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable and that

they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils made remarkably strong progress in 2018, much better than that of other pupils nationally from the same starting points. Progress was particularly strong in English and humanities subjects. Pupils currently at the school are also making strong progress across the curriculum. At this point in the term, disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are working at an even higher standard than last year's very successful cohort. In key stage 3, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than other pupils in the school are in many subjects, so that differences in attainment are diminishing. Staff know the pupils very well and ensure that their learning and pastoral needs are met. The focus on improving basic literacy skills and interventions, for example individual mentoring, has proved very successful for this group of pupils.
- Despite the strong support they receive, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND do not attend school as regularly as other pupils. Leaders have prioritised additional pupil premium spending to address this issue, so that staff can work even more closely with some families. This has already had a significant impact on reducing persistent absence in Year 11, but leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that these pupils attend as regularly as others do.
- Most-able pupils made impressive progress in 2018, particularly in mathematics, science and languages. Current pupils are also achieving well because of the high expectations of staff, good levels of challenge in lessons and the additional support they receive. Tasks set by teachers typically require pupils to think hard, and questioning is probing, encouraging pupils to develop and justify their answers. The most able pupils particularly benefit from the opportunities to take ownership of and responsibility for their learning. When this happens, pupils demonstrate an informed understanding of their strengths and the next steps in their learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge and awareness of pupils' needs to plan highly effective learning activities. Opportunities for pupils to re-visit and consolidate their learning are carefully planned, so that their knowledge and understanding develop successfully over time. Staff feel well supported and take part in a range of developmental activities that improve their practice. Leaders use school systems well to check that teaching remains consistently effective.
- Pupils in key stage 4 have a good understanding of the opportunities available to them when they leave school, including apprenticeships. Pupils are supported through a range of activities in enrichment days, tutor time and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, and through personal interviews with senior staff. The school's careers information and guidance programme does not yet extend to Years 7 and 8, and so these pupils have less understanding about the options that may be available to them. A senior member of staff has

recently taken responsibility to develop this programme and plans are already in place to enhance this aspect of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND attend school as regularly as other pupils
- the careers information and guidance programme is extended to ensure that pupils in key stage 3 are more aware of the options available to them
- the excellent teaching that exists in most areas of the school is firmly embedded throughout, particularly in a small number of option subjects, so that pupils' achievements remain consistently strong.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My colleague and I held meetings with you, other leaders, staff, local governors and trustees. We spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited several classes to observe learning, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtime. A range of documents was considered, including information on leaders' self-evaluation, safeguarding, current pupils' progress and the work of trustees. We took account of responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View (149 responses), and the responses to the staff survey (33 responses).