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Mr Matthew Woodville
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Dear Mr Woodville

Short inspection of Wellsway School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018 with David New, Ofsted Inspector, and Deborah Wring, 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 February 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment in April 2016, you have evaluated the strengths and areas of necessary development in the school. The senior leadership is very strong. You and your senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to make sure that pupils gain even greater successes. You are working well as a team. You provide and receive good training from the Wellsway Multi Academy Trust which has benefited the school.

Following the last inspection, senior leaders were asked to make sure that subject leaders took more direct responsibility for their departments. Subject leaders had to improve the quality of teaching and hold teams to account for the progress of the pupils in their subjects. You have restructured this area of leadership and appointed new staff. You have provided new policies and protocols for the curriculum directors. You and the other senior leaders have worked on a framework of expectations for teachers to use to improve their practice. This makes accountability clearer. Many staff have improved their practice in teaching and learning as a result. You introduced these initiatives in September 2017. It is too soon to measure accurately the impact on pupils' outcomes.

Another area for improvement identified at the last inspection was for teachers to make the most of the potential of pupils in their lessons. Teachers needed to consider

the amount of thought and effort pupils put into their work and work rate. You have made staff aware of the different needs of pupils according to their abilities. You have ensured that there is a greater focus on disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and often do better than other pupils nationally. You are right to be proud of this achievement. You have improved the tracking and checking of the progress these pupils make. You have better systems for ensuring that pupils catch up when they fall behind. Again, these measures are in their very early stages so more time is needed to see whether they secure rapid progress for pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff follow the school's policies and procedures on safeguarding well. They report immediately any concerns they identify about pupils' welfare or well-being. Written records about any such concerns and the actions taken are timely and thorough. Leaders work closely with families for the safety and protection of the school's pupils. The single central register, which records checks carried out on the suitability of staff before they are employed, is well maintained. Regular checking by leaders and governors helps ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The school has a positive and friendly atmosphere. Inspectors observed and talked with pupils, noting that they were relaxed and happy in the main. Parents and carers that responded to Parent View expressed very mixed views of how effectively the school deals with bullying. However, pupils were very clear that when bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. They had many anecdotes and personal experiences to share that support this view.

Pupils know about internet safety.

Inspection findings

- You have a high proportion of most-able pupils in the school. It exceeds the national average considerably. You recognised straight away after taking up your post that too many teachers did not have high enough expectations. In the examinations at the end of key stages 4 and 5, teachers were too willing to accept a minimum grade that enabled a pupil to pass. Too many teachers were not pushing pupils to gain grades that reflected their true potential. You have made teachers more aware of the capability of pupils. Now, pupils receive greater challenge in their learning at both key stages, although with greater effectiveness at key stage 5.
- We looked at the processes in place for supporting pupils when they make choices in subjects for examinations at the end of key stage 4. We also looked at the way you prepare pupils for life beyond school. You recognise that this is an important area to address. You have made sure that current Year 11 pupils and their parents have an individual conversation with senior leaders to discuss the pupils' future and career prospects. You plan to introduce more careers guidance from Year 7 onwards, so that younger pupils are better informed about potential opportunities. At present, this is an aspiration and not yet in place. You have, however, appointed

pastoral and curriculum key stage 2 to 3 transition leaders to work on improving arrangements from primary school to key stage 3. This is in recognition of the changing key stage 2 primary curriculum and its impact for teachers at the school.

- You have appointed a new leader to oversee the support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The majority of these pupils are making good progress. However, in some cases, teachers do not take enough account of the individual needs of these pupils recorded in their learning plans. In addition, some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not sufficiently involved with drawing up their plans. The attendance of these pupils is lower than that of other pupils at the school, and is not high enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new policies and practice devised to improve teaching and learning are firmly established so that pupils make rapid progress
- pupils in key stages 3 and 4 receive guidance about future choices and career opportunities
- pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are suitably involved in devising their individual learning plans
- the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities improves so that it is at least in line with that of pupils nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bath and North East Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, the directors of learning of SEN, science and English, the chief executive officer of the trust and the vice chair of governors. Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons in English, science, mathematics and the sixth form. Inspectors 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. I took into account 243 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 137 comments written by parents, the 101 staff and 89 pupil responses. In addition, we considered letters received from parents.