

29 March 2018

Mr Alan Salt
Principal
King Edward VI Community College
Ashburton Road
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 5JX

Dear Mr Salt

Short inspection of King Edward VI Community College

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2018 with Carol Hannaford and Mark Lees, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 2013.

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.**

You took up your post as principal in September 2014 and have developed a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to work on. You and your senior leadership team evaluate the school's work honestly and accurately. This is also true of the governing body. The priorities that you set for further development are well chosen. In addition, you have established a culture among leaders and other staff that does not seek to deny or make excuses for aspects of the school's work that are not as effective as you would like them to be. This is an important strength of the school and leads to a high degree of clarity and a collective understanding about what to focus on. For example, you shared inspectors' judgements that the performance of disadvantaged pupils, attendance and the rate of permanent exclusions all need to improve.

You have tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with some success. For example, improvements to teaching have ensured that the overall progress made by pupils as a whole has been at or above the national average in recent years. You have also sought to improve communication with parents and carers, although a significant minority of them still have worries in this area. In their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's survey of their opinion, a quarter of parents did not feel the school responded well to concerns they raised and 30%

would like more information about the progress their children make.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils said they feel safe at the school. The designated safeguarding lead has established a culture of vigilance in the school and is well supported in this work by the heads of house and other staff. A new electronic referral system means that information about any pupil at potential risk is swiftly gathered, analysed and acted upon where necessary. The school's understanding of the 'Prevent' duty is strong and leaders have made a number of referrals as a result. This is helping to keep children safe from the dangers of radicalisation and political extremism. The school also works with the local community by, for example, engaging with local efforts to address the risks posed by alcohol and drug misuse.

The school's single central record of the pre-employment checks carried out on teachers and other staff is in place but recording practice is not sharp enough. The record contained a number of clerical omissions, although these were put right by the end of the inspection. Until very recently, the safeguarding policy published on the school's website was two years out of date.

Inspection findings

- The inspection's first key line of enquiry concerned the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. For a number of years, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 4 has been significantly below the national average for pupils with similar starting points. In 2017, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils declined further and was particularly low in English, science and humanities. School leaders are acutely aware of the importance of successfully tackling this issue and have undertaken a number of initiatives to do so, including a recent review of their use of the pupil premium. Nonetheless, this situation has been going on for some time and leaders' actions have yet to bring about the rapid improvement needed.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers adapt the way they teach to address the particular needs of disadvantaged pupils and provide the support many of them need. When this is successful, there is little discernible difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This is not, however, consistent across the school and there is too much variation between subjects in the progress disadvantaged pupils make. Where teaching is less successful, teachers are too accepting of standards of work that are not high enough to secure good progress. This is reflected in disadvantaged pupils' results at key stage 4 in 2017, where they made better progress in mathematics and languages than they did in other subjects.
- The second line of enquiry in this inspection considered whether the 16 to 19 study programmes that students follow in the sixth form meet their needs. In 2017, the outcomes for students who completed their A levels dipped compared to previous years, especially in some of the larger entry subjects, such as psychology, sociology and history, and for girls. School leaders are well aware of

this and have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching in these subjects. As a result, current students are developing well and becoming confident learners with high aspirations. Students are very positive about the quality of their study programmes. They undertake high-quality work experience and work-related learning that is closely tied to their interests and aspirations. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.

- The inspection's third line of enquiry looked at attendance. For some years, overall attendance has been well below the national average, particularly for some key groups. In 2016/17, a quarter of disadvantaged pupils and over a quarter of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were persistently absent. The school is putting a lot of effort into improving attendance but this work is currently having little or no impact. Indeed, comparison of the current rates of attendance with the position this time last year indicates that attendance is declining.
- The final line of enquiry concerned the rate of permanent exclusions, which has risen sharply in the past 18 months. In 2015/16, one pupil was permanently excluded. This rose to five in 2016/17, and so far this year seven pupils have been permanently excluded. Leaders point to changes in the nature of the school's cohort, including a rise in the number of transient pupils, as part of the explanation for this but also recognise that this rate of permanent exclusion cannot continue. Consequently, they are adapting the way they use other sanctions short of permanent exclusion to respond to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy.
- A significant minority of staff and parents have concerns about the success with which behaviour is managed in the school. In the staff survey, for example, less than half of those who responded agreed that behaviour was good or that leaders supported staff well in managing it.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils more successfully so that the progress they make improves rapidly
- effective work with families and other agencies improves attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
- the management of pupils' behaviour improves so that the need to use permanent exclusion declines.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior staff, at the start of the day, to establish the key lines of enquiry to be pursued during the inspection. The inspection team visited lessons, often in the company of a senior leader, and examined pupils' work. During the day, inspectors held meetings with you, other senior staff, groups of pupils and the chair of governors. Inspectors also examined a range of information provided by the school, including documentation related to safeguarding. In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 125 responses to Parent View and 52 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.