

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Tom Macdonald
Headteacher
The Kingswinford School & Science College
Water Street
Kingswinford
West Midlands
DY6 7AD

Dear Mr Macdonald

Short inspection of The Kingswinford School & Science College

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2019 with Sukhbir Farar, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

Since your appointment to the school in September 2017, you have quickly established yourself as a credible leader. You have a determined and relentless focus to improve key areas of the school. You have worked hard to create an effective climate for learning. You have appointed a number of senior leaders and, together, you all have an open, honest and accurate view of the school's performance. You have built the confidence of the staff. The majority of them share your vision for eradicating underperformance to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, achieve the outcomes of which they are capable. You have implemented a number of clear plans in order to address areas of weakness, namely the progress of the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged. While the impact of these plans is yet to be fully realised, your relentless drive to improve pupils' outcomes means that there is a clear and collective vision to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

You have fully embraced the opportunities that being in a multi-academy trust afford. You have welcomed the support of a range of effective leaders to drive up standards and address areas of underperformance. The changes you have implemented – to the leadership team, to systems for quality assurance, the greater emphasis on accountability of all staff and the forensic and systematic analysis of performance data – are having a positive impact. The Windsor Academy Trust is unwavering in its pursuit of excellence for all and has implemented robust improvement plans. You have welcomed these plans.

Most parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey are happy with the school and speak highly of the care it provides for its young people. Some mentioned the high staff turnover. However, this largely happened because you identified staff who were underperforming and acted swiftly.

The pupils are the school's best advocates. They are extremely polite and well-mannered and treat each other with respect. They are proud of their school and of the opportunities they have. For example the 'WAT pledge' aims to give all pupils opportunities to learn life skills and complete activities that will enable them to become better citizens, show empathy and push their boundaries. This is very well received. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their school and, in particular, the changes that are further improving teaching and learning.

The previous inspection asked you to look at the teaching of the most able pupils and ensure that work is set to stretch them. While this has largely been done, there is still some variability in the teaching and learning of the most able. A few teachers, in some subjects, do not consistently plan work that is well matched to pupils' learning needs. As a result, some pupils complete work that is too easy for them. There is some excellent practice in some subjects, such as English. You and the leadership team recognise this and have started to make some significant changes, along with leaders from the multi-academy trust, to ensure that teachers' planning meets pupils' needs more effectively. This is leading to noticeable improvements in pupils' outcomes, particularly for those who are most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. You and the board of directors and the local advisory board take your responsibility of keeping pupils safe very seriously. All staff are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities in keeping children safe and they discharge these diligently.

You and other leaders provide high-quality and regular training to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Training is relevant and timely. You are very quick to act to ensure that there are no gaps in people's knowledge of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff follow the school's policies and procedures consistently and report any concerns they have about pupils' welfare or well-being. Leaders act swiftly on these concerns and make sure that pupils receive any support they may need. Written records about concerns and the actions taken are thorough. The required checks on staff before they are employed are carried out and recorded in line with statutory requirements.

Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe through a variety of ways, such as assemblies and outside agencies and speakers.

Inspection findings

- Since your appointment as headteacher, you have worked hard to ensure that there is a conducive climate for learning in the school. You have made some

significant changes to increase the capacity in senior leadership. The appointment of an assistant headteacher for teaching and learning has led to a greater focus on improving outcomes for all pupils, but particularly for the most able. The progress of the most able pupils has been too slow in some subjects. This is because learning is not always well matched to their learning needs and does not challenge them to extend their thinking. At times, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to write at length. You and other leaders, through your honest self-evaluation, are fully aware of this. You have a clear vision of how to improve the achievement of the most able by focusing on increasing aspiration and challenge. In addition, a greater focus on curriculum planning that is linked to higher-order thinking skills is leading to better pace and challenge in lessons. The most able pupils are now making stronger progress, although you recognise that they are still not achieving as well as they should.

- You and other leaders are implementing effective plans for staff training. You have a deep commitment to your programme of 'continuing professional learning' and have developed a high-quality programme of professional development. This is highly personalised and is leading to improvements in the progress of key groups of pupils, particularly the most able. Middle leaders from across the trust work extremely well together and joint planning ensures that teachers learn from the very best.
- The differences in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others, in the school and compared nationally, were identified as a concern. You are acutely aware of this and are taking effective action through a range of personalised strategies. For example, 'Focus on 5' involves each teacher targeting five disadvantaged pupils in their class and putting together a bespoke intervention package to improve their outcomes. This is leading to an improvement in the current progress of those pupils.
- The inspection team also examined your work to improve outcomes for those subjects that have had poorer outcomes historically, such as humanities and modern foreign languages. This work is timely and decisive. The deployment of directors of subject from the multi-academy trust in humanities and modern foreign languages is leading to greater accountability. They have identified very quickly the barriers to learning in these subjects and put strategies in place to address them. For example, joint planning is leading to more focus on the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding pupils need. Teachers in these subjects meet with teachers from other schools to make sure the work is pitched appropriately. This means that pupils' progress in modern foreign languages and humanities is improving at an impressive rate.
- The multi-academy trust is a pivotal partner in supporting the school to drive up standards. You and the leadership team have welcomed this and are working hard to ensure that all staff benefit from the expertise across the trust. For example, teachers routinely share examples of good practice and plan together to ensure that the work meets the needs of all pupils. You are also reviewing the curriculum to ensure that pupils in key stage 3 acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need in order to make strong progress.

- Governance is extremely strong. The local advisory board and the directors of the trust offer appropriate challenge and support to the school. The support from the deputy chief executive officer/director of education from the Windsor Academy Trust is very impressive. She is relentless in her pursuit of excellence and this is infectious. Leaders at all levels are held rigorously to account for the performance of all pupils and there is a comprehensive quality-assurance process in place that is designed to spot any underperformance quickly and draw up plans to address it.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in all subjects plan work that challenges all learners, but particularly the most able pupils
- leaders embed the changes they are making to the curriculum and teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils achieve the outcomes of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Warner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you and several members of the senior leadership team, the coordinator for most-able pupils, the assistant headteacher responsible for teaching and learning, the deputy chief executive officer of the trust, two directors of the trust and middle leaders.

We scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and local advisory board minutes. We checked records and other documents relating to safeguarding. We visited classes on learning walks, including with senior leaders, and checked pupils' progress in their books.