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Mrs Jane Cartwright
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jane Cartwright

Short inspection of Chenderit School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2017 with Tracey Ydlibi, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is no mean feat, given the turbulence caused by the long-term illness and absence of several staff, including the deputy headteacher and head of the sixth form. In the face of these and other setbacks, you have maintained an unwavering focus on high standards. The school has a calm and purposeful feel, and pupils are keen to learn and do their best.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. You take a rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching. Staff are very clear about your expectations. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now more consistent across the school. For example, staff consistently follow the school's assessment policy to provide useful feedback to pupils. Pupils told us that they find this helpful, because they know how well they are doing in different subjects.

You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and share these openly with governors. This open approach means that leaders and governors share a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve. Your development plan is ambitious but realistic; you act with determination to address any areas of weakness and ensure that the school continues to improve. Following the previous inspection, governors underwent training and changed how they

worked, to ensure that they were better informed about the school's performance. They keep a close eye on how successfully leaders implement the development plan, and are effective in holding you to account for the school's continued success.

The previous inspection identified that middle-ability pupils, and boys in particular, were not making fast enough progress in English and mathematics. You identified that in Year 9, these pupils were losing interest in their work and switching off. You have changed the curriculum so that pupils now begin their GCSE courses in Year 9. Our observations of learning and discussions with pupils confirmed that this change has been successful in ensuring that pupils are motivated and maintain an interest in their learning. Middle-ability pupils are now making better progress.

Too few of the most able pupils reach the highest grades in their subjects. Leaders have introduced initiatives to make sure staff are clear about age-related expectations in different subjects and that pupils achieve mastery of their subjects. This is not fully developed, or embedded across the school. You are wisely cautious about making predictions for this year, but the school lacks a coherent strategy to ensure that all teachers can confidently ask challenging questions of the most able, or enable them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding to secure the highest grades at GCSE examinations.

Despite the staffing difficulties, staff remain supportive of the school's aims and confirm that the school is improving under your leadership.

Pupils are confident, friendly and engage well with visitors. They describe their school as 'close knit' and a 'friendly community'. They benefit from opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as debating, sport and drama, which play a significant role in developing their confidence. The school is renowned for the quality of pupils' art work and the gallery is an important, well-regarded feature. You have recognised the need to address well-being, stress and mental health issues. For example, sixth-form students recently took part in a 'stress relief' day to help them prepare for their forthcoming examinations. These are important first steps towards ensuring that there is a coherent programme of personal development in place for all pupils. However, the quality of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) varies considerably from class to class. Not all teachers ensure that this important subject is well delivered. Equally so, the 'core' programme in the sixth form offers students important opportunities to develop life skills, resilience and confidence. Students told us that it is sometimes dropped so that they have more time to prepare for examinations.

The school's pastoral team provides effective support to pupils who, for whatever reason, need some extra support or a listening ear. Not all pupils know about the excellent work they do, nor understand that they can access this service. This is true, too, of their parents.

The vast majority of pupils we spoke with believed that bullying was rare and that it was dealt with effectively; a small minority disagreed. You agree that some of the younger pupils may feel anxious in moving from a small primary school to a large secondary school. There are some initiatives in place for older pupils to support younger ones. For example, they act as ambassadors and help out in practical lessons. These opportunities are not widespread, however, or fully embedded in the life of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have excellent knowledge of local systems and are tenacious in following up any referrals they make to the local authorities with which they deal. They understand the importance of early help and ensure that they intervene at the right stage to ensure that pupils and their parents get the help they need in order to prevent problems from escalating.

The safeguarding team has effective systems in place to monitor all pupils about whom they have concerns. Weekly meetings ensure that staff share information and keep a close eye on pupils they are worried about. They keep detailed and accurate records of their work.

Many parents have written to you to thank members of the pastoral team for their support. However, not all pupils know about the excellent work that these leaders do.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have made good use of the funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that these pupils attend school and achieve well. You have appointed an additional member of staff to work on engaging with the families of disadvantaged pupils. This initiative has been successful. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school shows a significant reduction from last year. Across the school, disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with their peers. In class, teachers have a better heightened awareness of who these pupils are and how to address their needs before the gaps grow any wider.
- Changes to the curriculum have ensured that middle-ability pupils are now more engaged with their work and making better progress. However, too few of the most able pupils reach the highest grades in their subjects.
- The standards reached at A level are at least in line with, and often above, national averages. However, there is some disparity in how well students on different courses achieve. Leaders have addressed this, by working with leaders in the science department, for example, to ensure better quality teaching across all subjects. This work has been successful and rates of progress are rising.
- The school has had some success in engaging parents in the life of the school. However, not all parents know enough about the systems in place to deal with bullying, or about the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are more consistently challenged by their work and know how to achieve the highest grades
- PSHE is consistently well taught and delivered across school, and tutorial time is used well
- they build on developments to improve engagement and information sharing with parents so that all parents know who to approach with any issues they have and are confident in the school's systems for dealing with bullying and safeguarding issues.

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

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection and agree the areas to focus on during this inspection. Further meetings were held with middle leaders and governors. Inspectors spoke formally with four groups of pupils from different year groups and informally with others at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Jointly with school leaders, inspectors observed learning in a variety of subjects and looked at the work in pupils' books. A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, records of the monitoring of teaching, performance management information, the school's complaints log, records of behaviour, bullying and safeguarding and minutes of the governing body. Inspectors took into account the 148 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 58 responses to the staff survey. In addition, inspectors looked at the school's own parental and pupils' survey.