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Mr Nick Bradwell
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Dear Mr Bradwell

Short inspection of Warlingham School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017 with Susan Derrick, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In the last two years, pupils' progress and attainment had slipped. You recognise, for example, that action to halt the decline in sixth-form students' outcomes should have taken place earlier. However, ably supported by leaders and governors, you have now taken the necessary steps to sustain the education of all pupils and students at Warlingham School. Staff commitment is summed up in the school's motto, 'Widening Horizons, Raising Aspirations'. The many members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed their pride in the school and confidence in senior leaders. The school has taken on a lead role in a new multi-academy trust in the community, recognising that Warlingham and the four local primary schools will all benefit from working together.

You and other senior leaders are open and honest in your evaluation of the school. You know its strengths and weaknesses well. This means that you have been able to take the required action to improve less effective aspects. For example, middle leaders' skills in evaluating how well pupils are doing are improving rapidly. Through careful monitoring activities, planned during the school year, and pertinent actions following on from them, many middle leaders strive to generate the highest standards in their departments. There is an open culture where everyone works together to improve progress for all pupils and students.

The previous inspection highlighted the need for work to challenge all pupils to make the best progress they can. In many subjects, this is now happening increasingly

successfully, with feedback to pupils making more demands on them to improve their work. You and other leaders are improving teaching by carefully identifying where practice is less effective and then providing support. Teachers have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities and they actively share good practice, which is improving the quality of teaching overall. Furthermore, leaders and governors have been prepared to take firm action if, once development programmes have been provided, their high expectations are not met.

Safeguarding is effective.

The open culture you have created in your school means that pupils are safe, they know how to stay safe and know who to turn to if they have any issues. You, governors and other leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records for pupils who are at risk are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment procedures are sound. Comprehensive up-to-date training ensures that staff are aware of their duties and the signs to look out for that might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. They know when and how to refer any concerns to the leader responsible for safeguarding. Concerns include, for example, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation or risks from extremist or radical views.

Leaders work effectively with others agencies, when needed, to ensure that pupils are supported and protected. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work to keep their children safe, and your pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe.

Inspection findings

- Following the disappointing progress made by pupils in 2016, inspectors investigated how effective leaders' responses have been. Leaders have embedded a more rigorous approach to the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You and other senior leaders display a clear purpose about what is needed to bring about effective improvement in pupils' progress. You track the improvements in pupils' progress well. Boys are making better progress across the school now than in the recent past. Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of which subjects are strengths, for example the sciences, mathematics and humanities. You are also clear about which pupil groups have been underachieving. In many cases these have been disadvantaged boys, for example.
- Inspectors also enquired how well leaders at all levels were tackling underachievement and found your work increasingly effective. Your measurement of the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school indicates that they are now achieving well. Work seen in these pupils' books supports your view. Similarly, pupils in Year 11 are making better progress in English. Inspectors noted that, in recent months, disadvantaged pupils have been successfully challenged by effective teaching and are doing at least as well as other pupils of similar ability. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of all the strategies now in place.
- You and other leaders have kept the curriculum under careful review in the last two years. For example, the decision to provide more time to English and mathematics in

key stage 4 signals your intention for all pupils to be fully prepared for examination success, as well as the next stage in their education. Good quality advice and guidance to pupils about suitable courses is now regularly available, especially for those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. External reviews of both business studies and computing have led to improvements in these subjects.

- Inspectors were interested to see how for those pupils with low starting points you improved their literacy, in particular. We found that pupils with low starting points on entry are making good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills, often through leaders' effective use of the pupil premium grant. Leaders have also introduced a more streamlined and rigorous approach to judging pupils' work using new GCSE levels as markers of performance in all years. Leaders also know that more work is needed to ensure the best impact of these changes.
- Overall, in 2015 and 2016, fixed-term exclusions were below the national average and no permanent exclusions were made. However, pupils eligible for free school meals, and those identified for special educational needs support, have been excluded much more than their peers in the past. This year, a range of internal interventions and closer working with parents has brought about a reduction in these levels. The curriculum has also been refined to better match pupils' needs. The Maple Room has been successfully used to reintegrate several pupils at risk of repeat exclusions.
- Whole-school approaches to maintaining and improving good attendance are working well. Attendance, including for those eligible for pupil premium funding and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is now just above average, which contributes to their improved progress. Attendance to lessons is similarly strong and pupils adhere well to expectations for punctuality.
- Leaders can account for some of the underlying factors affecting historical and recent attendance patterns because they keep careful and detailed records. Attendance remains a high profile within the school. However, even though the school has worked very hard to reduce the unauthorised absence of some pupils eligible for free school meals, their attendance remains stubbornly low.
- Inspectors also examined the dip in students' performance at the end of the sixth form in 2016. You and the governing body commissioned an external review to analyse overall weaknesses in detail. You recognise that such action should have been taken earlier. In the very short time since this review, you are making improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form, yet you are aware that challenging all sixth-form students to do better needs to be consistently promoted by all teachers. More robust leadership, the businesslike atmosphere, and strong pastoral support, with firmer application of work deadlines, have helped pupils to become more aspirational. Students are expected to achieve higher results this year than was the case last year. Significantly, nearly all the 25 students retaking their GCSE English in November gained at least a C grade.
- Teachers challenge students better now to think hard and deepen their understanding. Files and examination preparation materials are well organised and students are making better progress than in the recent past. Students spoke warmly of the support they receive and recognise that they also must be more responsible

and dedicated to their studies. The guidance and advice they receive about the next steps in their lives are of good quality. There are many opportunities for students to take leadership roles in the school and they become good role models for younger pupils. Such responsibilities contribute well to attributes they need as adults.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision for 16 to 19 students offers effective challenge for all abilities
- unauthorised absence of disadvantaged pupils reduces, to bring their attendance in line with the rest of the school so that their progress improves.

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

Yours sincerely

Hugh Betterton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, a group of governors, and sixth-form students. I also held a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. Both inspectors talked with pupils around the school and during lessons. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 classes across the school with senior leaders, as well as sampling pupils' work. We scrutinised and evaluated documents including your safeguarding policies and records, attendance and behaviour logs, school self-evaluation, and the school development plan. Minutes from governors' meetings, evaluations of teaching and learning, and performance management information were also examined. Account was taken of 101 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 100 additional written responses from parents, and 84 staff and 48 pupil responses to their online Ofsted questionnaires.