

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Nicola Bull
Headteacher
St Edmund's Girls' School
Church Road
Laverstock
Salisbury
SP1 1RD

Dear Mrs Bull

Short inspection of St Edmund's Girls' School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with John White, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as head of school in April 2017, you have quickly identified areas for improvement. You have acted on them swiftly. This has ensured that teaching is getting stronger and pupils are achieving better outcomes. You were appointed to the substantive position of headteacher in October 2017. This has added stability to your position. In addition, it has meant that changes are sustainable under your leadership. You have clarity of vision and a relentless drive to raise standards. You are well supported by your leadership team.

The Christian ethos permeates the work of the school. You and the leadership team have a very inclusive attitude. The pupils are very appreciative of the guidance and help they receive. Your ideas for the future are realistic and inspiring. There is a buzz within the leadership team that is tangible. You and your colleagues are eager to continue the work to take the school forward, ably supported by the new governance structure. With so much activity taking place, we spoke of the need to evaluate thoroughly so that you use only the most effective plans.

Since the last inspection, you have made sure that colleagues are more aware of pupils' ability, in particular that of the most able. In addition, you have made teachers aware of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. There has been good work done to improve the outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. However, you know that there is still further work to do to ensure that teachers match work to the different ability levels of pupils and challenge the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of a high quality and detailed. Staff are trained well on how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Your deputy designated safeguarding leader makes sure that the increasing numbers of pupils who have complex needs are safe and secure in school. Safeguarding leaders and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) work determinedly, yet sensitively, with pupils, parents and carers and external agencies to monitor and support the most vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are strong and part of the school's culture. This is vital because you are on an unusual site that has three neighbouring secondary schools and all the transportation and pedestrian access issues that go with that.

Inspection findings

- We discussed in detail the work that leaders have done to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You have identified the issues for these pupils and researched the best ways to remove barriers to their learning. You have a team of three colleagues who focus on the pupils' progress and monitor it carefully. This allows timely intervention to take place when pupils fall behind in their work. You diminished the difference between their achievement and that of others nationally by half in 2017. You are working to further diminish the difference in this summer's examinations. You are raising the aspirations of disadvantaged pupils. The most able take part in the many incentives the school employs for high-ability pupils. There has been a focus on engaging parents of disadvantaged pupils so that there is more support within the home environment.
- Next, we looked at the work done to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Despite having 47 feeder primary schools, your SENCo and other leaders visit each one to assess the needs of pupils before the transition to secondary school. There are effective transition arrangements that allow pupils to come into school more often at the end of Year 6. Routines are established prior to the September start. As a result, pupils have a greater understanding of the layout of the school and the personnel with whom they will be working. This makes for a seamless change, and learning can begin immediately. There is a similar level of support for pupils when making the transition to education and training at 16. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities spoke of their successful interviews at sixth-form colleges and others have secured local apprenticeships.
- The curriculum was our next point of discussion because of the impact of early entry on this year's outcomes at GCSE. Your curriculum planning is about securing effective achievement in a range of subjects so that pupils are not just successful post-16 but in their mid-twenties in a competitive market place. You are developing a model that has a broad curriculum at key stage 3. Leaders in English and mathematics analyse the data from the end of key stage 2 tests so that planning matches the areas in which pupils were less proficient. The curriculum at key stage 4 is shared with one of the neighbouring schools so pupils have a wider choice of options. You have started to offer vocational

pathways and are investigating further which vocational examinations can be taken to enhance pupils' success in the English baccalaureate.

- Finally, we discussed the outcomes of the most able pupils because this has not been good enough in the recent past. You have appointed a lead professional who is mentoring the most able pupils. You have invested in a range of extra-curricular opportunities to inspire pupils to reach for the highest calibre careers that will match their potential. Leaders are monitoring pupils' attitudes to learning more efficiently. When the most able pupils are failing to engage with their learning in a curious and interested way, staff intervene just as they do when academic learning falls behind. This early intervention is relatively new but has been very worthwhile already. It is helping the most able pupils take their learning to a different level of enquiry. You know that this development is in its infancy and needs to be embedded in teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans, policies and practice are monitored relentlessly to ensure that they continue to improve the quality of education
- teaching continues to improve so that the level of challenge continues and extends so pupils deepen their thinking and learning in the core and wider curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. 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 SENCo, the executive headteacher of the trust and governors. Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons in English, science and mathematics. Inspectors looked at the quality of work in pupils' workbooks and considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. We took into account 188 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 124 comments written by parents, 77 staff responses and 107 pupil ones. In addition, we considered messages received from parents.