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Ms Rachelle Regan
Acting Headteacher
Kingsbury High School
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Dear Ms Regan

Short inspection of Kingsbury High School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018 with Bruce Goddard and Ian Morris, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has responded to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report, as is evident from the improved progress made by students in key stages 4 and 5 in both 2016 and 2017. The impact made by middle leaders, for example in science, is indicated by the effective progress made by almost all pupils, including by disadvantaged pupils.

You and the leadership team have provided stability for the school following the recent departure of the headteacher. Staff and pupils are very positive about your leadership and you have the unqualified support of governors. Those staff, pupils and parents who responded to the Ofsted surveys are proud of the school and its traditions; the large majority confirm that pupils are safe and happy at school.

A significant minority of those who responded to the surveys said that the school needs to do a better job of responding to some episodes of bullying. On the day of the inspection, the behaviour of pupils observed by inspectors was generally very good; pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that they felt safe in school. Pupils reported that low-level disruption sometimes interrupts learning in lessons, particularly in lower-ability sets; inspectors also saw some evidence of this on the day. Leaders rightly want to ensure excellent behaviour for learning, and are in the process of developing the behaviour system to further improve the consistency of behaviour in all lessons, regardless of pupils' starting points. The attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, is in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school is just above the national

average. Leaders have rightly identified this as an area for further improvement and a new member of staff has been appointed recently to lead in this area. While the punctuality of pupils has improved following a school initiative, it is too soon to judge the impact of this appointment on overall attendance.

Governors have taken robust action, following the departure of the headteacher, to stabilise the school and maintain momentum and morale for the staff and pupils. A clear plan is in place to guide the school through the process of appointing a new headteacher. Governors are committed to providing support and challenge for the leadership and would do so more effectively if all governors were given the chance to contribute equally; less experienced governors would benefit from additional training to build their confidence in strategic matters. This will further strengthen the governing body.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose, and that records are suitably detailed. Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They say that staff are approachable if there is something that troubles them or that they need to share. You, together with your staff and governors, ensure that the safety and well-being of pupils is a priority. Staff follow the school's systems and processes carefully to support pupils' welfare.

Staff and governors are clear about their safeguarding roles, and work effectively with parents and external agencies to safeguard pupils. Staff have received appropriate information and training covering all the statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, we agreed to look at leaders' actions to improve the performance of girls in key stage 4 mathematics. Girls make relatively less progress in mathematics than they do in other subjects. However, girls in the school still perform above the national average for all pupils nationally in mathematics.
- Visits to mathematics lessons provided evidence that effective teaching is bringing about improved progress for girls. This was particularly the case in higher-attaining sets where pupils were attentive and engaged, demonstrating an obvious desire to learn. Informal conversations with pupils confirmed girls' belief that they can perform well in mathematics.
- School information indicates that there remains some variability in the teaching of mathematics and leaders have taken action to improve this situation. For example, a new policy for assessment has been developed to ensure that all teachers offer the same quality of feedback for pupils as is evident in the most effective subjects, such as English.
- The school's assessment information suggests that while girls are likely to make positive progress in mathematics in 2018, it will not yet match that made in other subjects.
- Secondly, we agreed to explore the impact of leaders' actions to accelerate the

progress of the most able pupils in key stage 4 humanities. This was because those pupils made less progress in these subjects, particularly history, than their peers from different starting points in 2017.

- The appointment of a new head of faculty in September 2017 has brought renewed purpose to the area. Teaching is becoming more consistently effective as a result of planned and focused monitoring by leaders. Strategies for challenging the learning of most-able pupils, such as through more sharply differentiated tasks, are being developed across the faculty.
- Leaders are also developing the curriculum for September 2018 by giving younger pupils in key stage 3, including the most able, increased time for history and geography in order to provide a more solid foundation for GCSE study.
- Effective practice from more successful humanities subjects, such as religious studies and sociology, is now being shared more regularly, which is leading to improvements in all areas.
- Thirdly, we agreed to explore leaders' actions to develop the curriculum, which have brought about improved progress for disadvantaged pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was very strong in 2017, and above the national average for all pupils in many subjects. The overall attainment of disadvantaged pupils in 2017 was in line with attainment for all pupils nationally, but below that for non-disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders and governors expressed a clear aspiration to improve the life chances of disadvantaged pupils by providing the best education possible. A governor and a senior leader have been identified to focus on disadvantaged pupils and to ensure that they are at front of leaders' thinking about improving learning. A number of strategies are used to help disadvantaged pupils engage in school life. These include support from Year 12 mentors for those falling behind in their studies, and a range of revision materials and study guides in Year 11. The school also provides priority access for disadvantaged pupils to limited places available for study support on Saturdays. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from learning a broad range of subjects, including practical and arts subjects.
- Finally, we agreed to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to improve student outcomes in applied courses in key stage 5. The progress made by students on applied courses in 2017 was below that for those with the same starting points on A-level courses. Girls on applied courses made less progress than boys in 2017.
- Leaders have identified appropriate issues, and have taken action to improve teaching on applied courses. Support is being provided to enable teachers to improve their practice, learning from colleagues who have a track record of success. Sharper target-setting has resulted in more effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and assessment, leading to evident improvements in the progress of students. Leaders acknowledge that more remains to be done to bring the quality of provision for applied courses up to the high standard achieved in A-level courses. They rightly see this as a priority for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- whole-school systems are refined, leading to excellent learning in all lessons, regardless of pupils' starting points. This will include the development of a consistent approach to differentiation across all subjects; and embedding the new assessment policy to enable sharper monitoring of pupils' performance
- the quality of teaching and assessment for applied courses in key stage 5 matches that of A-level courses.

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

Yours sincerely

David Boyle
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you and senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, to discuss the work of the school. I also held a separate meeting with representatives of the governing body. We held informal conversations with pupils and staff. We visited 14 classes jointly with members of your senior team, across all key stages. We analysed a range of documents including: the school's self-evaluation and aspects of the development plan; assessment and attendance information; safeguarding information; school policies and procedures. We checked the information on the school's website. We considered the views of 65 parents who replied to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the views of 143 staff and 677 pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire.