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Matthew Pawson
Headmaster
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Dear Mr Pawson

Short inspection of Trinity School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Sue Bzikot, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your senior leadership team provide clear and principled leadership, underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. The school is popular with parents and is heavily oversubscribed. As a result, additional classrooms are being built to accommodate an increasing number of pupils. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they would recommend the school to others. One said, 'My son has progressed beyond my expectations at Trinity.'

You have an ongoing focus on improving the school. You hold staff strongly to account and have rigorous, yet developmental, systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders and governors know the school very well and have effective plans in place to bring about further improvement. For example, at the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with ensuring that information about pupils' progress was simplified. As a result, you have made your assessment system clearer for pupils, staff and parents, using the information gathered to make sure pupils quickly get the help they need to make good or better progress.

You have worked hard to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently high, following a period of turbulence in staffing where some teachers were teaching outside of their subject specialism. Staffing is now on a much more stable footing. As a result, the school's first set of GCSE examination results in 2018 was strong.

The information you shared with me, although unvalidated at the time of the inspection, shows that outcomes were good for pupils from their actual starting points. Disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their peers. Pupils who are currently in the school, including disadvantaged pupils, are making stronger progress than previously because of consistently good-quality teaching from subject specialists.

A culture of warmth, friendliness and mutual support is evident throughout the school. Staff are proud to work at Trinity and relationships between staff and pupils are caring and trusting. One parent summed this up by saying: 'The school has a lovely atmosphere and I am always impressed when I see the staff greeting the pupils every morning.' Pupils behave well and treat each other and visitors with respect. They are smartly presented, keen to learn and proud of their school. This is embodied by the 'class ambassadors' who greet visitors to their lessons, confidently explaining what they are learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority and is well led and managed. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and training for staff and governors is frequent. Leaders have ensured that procedures to recruit staff safely are used well. Record-keeping is thorough and methodical. Governors oversee safeguarding practices on an ongoing-basis, checking that processes and policies are up to date. Governors are frequent and welcome visitors to the school and pupils know who they are and appreciate their presence.

Pupils are taught in timetabled lessons how to stay safe, as well as receiving information through assemblies and from visiting speakers. For example, pupils told inspectors how they appreciated the recent visit from a member of the prison service. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, that bullying is rare and they know who to go to if they need help. They have confidence that issues will be dealt with and know they can seek out staff should they need to. Parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children are well cared for and safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- The first area considered during the inspection was how much progress pupils are making over time across subjects, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able. The school's analysis of GCSE examination results for 2018 showed that these pupils in particular made less progress than others in the school.
- In lessons, pupils of all levels of prior attainment make solid progress and most disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as their peers due to high-quality teaching. Inspectors saw a range of lessons across all year groups. In nearly all cases, disadvantaged pupils were engaged well in their learning, thinking hard and producing work of good quality. However, the school's information shows that too many pupils are missing school and disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be absent from school than others. When this happens, they fall further behind in their work over time. Leaders have launched a new strategy to ensure

that pupils catch up with missed work, but it is too soon to assess whether or not it is working.

- The most able pupils make good progress from their starting points. At key stage 4, pupils benefit from a number of interventions before and after school to address any gaps in their knowledge. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that the most able pupils make the maximum progress of which they are capable. However, some teachers do not offer them sufficient challenge to make them think hard enough.
- Inspectors explored the effect that staff training is having on the quality of teaching, as this was an area identified for improvement in the previous inspection. Developing and empowering staff is a high priority. There is a well-thought-out programme of regular whole-school training, as well as bespoke sessions to meet individual staff needs. Teachers told inspectors how much they value and appreciate it. For example, middle leaders followed an extensive training programme last year, which has helped them develop their leadership skills. In addition, twenty staff have been trained as coaches and are beginning to use this technique to help others reflect on and adapt their practice in the classroom.
- The impact of this training is clear to see in the classroom. Inspectors saw many examples of teachers using well-considered questioning techniques to make pupils think harder. Pupils' oracy skills are developing well. They speak articulately and with confidence, using subject-specific vocabulary accurately. In books, inspectors saw examples of pupils writing fluently and at length. Pupils also show resilience to solve problems on their own, and to make their own notes. Pupils of all abilities and across a range of subjects are making strong progress from their starting points.
- Finally, inspectors looked at how the new sixth-form provision is developing and how well students are prepared for their next steps. The 60 students in Year 12 have settled well. Nearly half of last year's Year 11 cohort stayed on, and some students were recruited from other schools. All students spoken to said that they received helpful advice and guidance on which courses to choose. Students new to the school were full of praise for the welcome and support that they had received.
- The head of the sixth form has a strong vision for its development and is already planning to offer new courses next year to meet the needs of learners. Staff with previous post-16 experience were especially recruited so that students make a strong start to their studies. Inspectors saw Year 12 students challenged and supported in equal measure, in a range of lessons. Progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding was strong.
- Students in the sixth form follow a range of A-level courses, supplemented by an enrichment programme to broaden their skills. All students are expected to involve themselves in service to the community and the school. As a result, although the sixth form is in its very early stages, students are well prepared for their next steps.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching sufficiently challenges the most able pupils so that they make even stronger progress
- pupils' attendance improves, especially disadvantaged pupils' attendance, so that they access learning along with other pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Paula Sargent
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other school leaders, teachers, two members of the governing body and a group of pupils. We observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to a number of lessons. All of these visits were conducted jointly with members of the school's staff. We scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, safeguarding records, and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. We considered the views expressed in 262 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 259 free-text comments by parents, together with 77 questionnaires returned by pupils and 74 returned by school staff.