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Mrs Sammy Crook
Headteacher
Tiverton High School
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Dear Mrs Crook

Short inspection of Tiverton High School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2019 with Carol Hannaford and Malcolm Willis, 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 July 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 lead a highly inclusive school which benefits pupils and the local community. Since your appointment in 2016, you and your leadership team have worked hard to ensure that the school continues to improve. You have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and a real determination to drive up standards for all pupils. You have established a positive and optimistic culture, which is appreciated by staff and pupils alike.

Since the last inspection, you have maintained a strong focus on the quality of teaching. The development and training of staff have been a priority for you and your team, and this has had an impact on the progress made by pupils across the school. Middle leaders and classroom teachers are now more accountable for their actions, and they have responded well to the changes you have put in place. There is a strong sense of common purpose in the school. Your concern for individuals is a striking feature of your leadership, which you summed up with the statement, 'We stopped working with data; we started working with pupils.'

You have successfully halted a decline in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that all staff at every level in the school share responsibility for their progress. This is improving both the achievement and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school. However, while much success has been achieved, further work is needed to ensure that these pupils' outcomes are at least in line with those of other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the school's leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date, meet requirements and are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of good quality. School leaders, together with teachers and other staff, and supported well by governors, have created a caring community that keeps pupils safe and well looked after. Effective procedures ensure that the safety, welfare and all-round development of pupils prepare them well for the next steps in their lives.

School leaders are proactive in ensuring that locally identified issues are brought quickly to the attention of staff. Pupils have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and are fully aware of the risks that they may face in the world today, including threats to their safety, such as extremism, drug abuse and sexual exploitation.

Governors' attention to safeguarding is strong. They help to ensure that it permeates the life of the school. The nominated safeguarding governor meets regularly with the school's designated safeguarding lead to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements and of staff training.

Inspection findings

- You have a very clear understanding of what is working well in the school and what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement. Your enthusiastic and highly skilled leadership team have welcomed the changes you have made since you took over as headteacher. You also have the strong support of staff and governors.
- A key line of enquiry for the inspectors was the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who entered the school with attainment that was above average in English and/or mathematics. The work observed in lessons and in pupils' books indicates no discernible difference between the work of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers. The school's assessment information confirms that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving and the difference between their progress and that of other pupils continues to reduce. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved this year. There has also been an improvement in the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent.
- Inspectors also looked at the attendance of pupils generally. You and your leadership team are aware that this is a priority area for improvement, and you have implemented a rigorous, whole-school approach which is beginning to have an impact. Attendance is improving, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is declining. You are now working hard to ensure that their attendance continues to improve towards national averages.
- You have been effective in reducing the number of exclusions from school. In 2016/2017, the rate of fixed-term exclusions was above the national average for similar schools, but since then the numbers have declined. In 2017/2018, there was a 20% reduction in the numbers of pupils excluded. You are confident that the new behaviour policy, with its intense focus on high-quality teaching, will help to reduce the number of exclusions still further.

- An additional line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all pupils, including the most able pupils. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils are challenged more often so that aspirations are raised. Pupils learn quickly when teachers have high expectations and work hard to meet their individual needs. Where progress is stronger, teachers' feedback helps pupils to progress more quickly, and pupils of all abilities have access to a range of resources to support their learning. Because there remains some variation in the quality of teaching in some subjects, leaders are aware of the need to ensure that teachers share good practice more regularly with each other.
- You and your team have begun to reshape the curriculum, and this is helping to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. New vocational courses offer an additional degree of choice, and more pupils are choosing to study languages. All pupils now have the opportunity to study separate sciences. The recently introduced 'Learning Journeys' have been well received by pupils and are helping to give greater coherence to the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and improving. This is because of your focus on identifying and meeting their individual needs, your careful tracking of their progress and your drive to make them independent learners.
- Governors, leaders, teachers and other staff are committed to the school and are ambitious for its future. Staff appreciate the regular training that they receive, and they value the excellent relationships that exist at all levels.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to other parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the successful measures that the school has taken to improve attendance in order to make sure that all groups of pupils attend school regularly and that persistent absence is rare
- they accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils so that it matches the best performance in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Steward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you and your senior team, middle leaders and members of the governing body.

We talked to pupils, both formally in groups and informally around the school. We visited lessons with you and your team to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance and the use of pupil premium funding.

Inspectors took account of the 101 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 101 written comments from parents. We also looked at the 57 responses to the pupils' questionnaire and the 80 responses to the staff questionnaire.