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Mr Bruce Douglas
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Douglas

Short inspection of Wyvern Academy

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019 with Katherine Powell, 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 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. Since your appointment, you have worked tirelessly with trustees, your senior team and staff to strengthen the systems and processes to ensure the ongoing improvement of Wyvern. As a team, you are determined to provide the very best for pupils. You all have high expectations and high aspirations. This team approach has ensured that any changes are researched, well thought through, practical and, at times, innovative. The school has therefore improved its offer to pupils as well as maintaining its ethos as a community that values each individual. Staff say they are proud to work at the school. Typical comments from parents who responded to the Ofsted survey included statements that the school is 'brilliant', 'excellent' and 'amazing'.

Over time at the school, pupils make strong progress. They develop communication well. They acquire skills in English and mathematics. Pupils learn to play and work alongside others. They learn to concentrate better, and are able to express choice and ask questions. They develop self-help, independence and physical skills well. This means that they are prepared well for adult life.

Safeguarding is effective.

The staff's deep care for individuals ensures that pupils are well looked after and are kept safe. Staff know pupils well, so can respond to any communication from the individual or any changes in behaviour. Procedures for reporting concerns are clear and well used.

The safeguarding leadership team meets regularly. The inclusion of the school nurse and the family support worker is a strength of this team. Different perspectives are valuable for understanding the concerns that are raised. The team monitors matters carefully and ensures swift action by the most relevant professional. There is effective liaison with outside agencies. The team members ensure that they are up to date with good practice. They are reflective and very aware of the particular safeguarding issues that their environment presents.

Training for staff takes place regularly and is informed by current national priorities or the school's priorities following its own monitoring. Policies are clear. Leaders make the necessary statutory checks and follow government guidelines diligently to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. Trustees monitor the school's work carefully, using external audits to inform their work.

Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils told inspectors that 'teachers keep them safe'.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry was to consider how leaders responded to the previous inspection and improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders took immediate steps and provided training for staff on improving challenge and developing techniques for prompting pupils. Staff valued this training and felt it enhanced their practice and, as a result, pupils have a higher level of challenge and some pupils now direct their own learning. Leaders have also strengthened assessment processes throughout the school, including capturing pupils' learning on video and reporting more frequently to parents. Senior and middle leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, and support teachers to improve. Leaders have taken strong action when any underperformance has been identified.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school. Teachers plan appropriate activities in English and mathematics that are matched to pupils' needs. Staff ensure that lessons are well resourced. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and pupils are supported to overcome their barriers to learning, so they can make progress. At times, pupils' learning in less structured activities is not as strong. Some of these activities lack a clear purpose and objectives are not precise enough to ensure that individuals are making the best progress they can.
- Another key line of enquiry was to explore how leaders have developed pupils' personal development, and have improved behaviour. Leaders have reviewed the approach to behaviour, investigating and implementing the approach that would best meet the school's aspiration that pupils will manage their own behaviour better. The tracking and monitoring of behaviour have been strengthened and a new post has been created to support staff. Bespoke approaches ensure that pupils address sensory issues and physical difficulties. The safeguarding team ensures that attendance is carefully monitored and absence followed up.

- Incidents of challenging behaviour have reduced in number significantly. Pupils who need the most support in this area are making good progress towards regulating their own behaviour. This means that pupils are spending more time engaged in learning and are better prepared for adult life. Through the physical education programme, pupils are developing good posture, head control, eye contact and gaze. This means that pupils are becoming more effective learners, are more able to communicate their needs and are becoming more independent. Most pupils attend school regularly. Staff work effectively with families of those pupils with the most complex medical needs to ensure that any persistent absence is reduced.
- A third line of enquiry evaluated the effectiveness of the curriculum. Pupils experience a wide range of interesting activities. There is a clear focus on developing key skills in lessons, particularly communication. Staff amend topics to ensure that they engage pupils. There is a strong focus in the sixth form on ensuring that students have successful transitions to their next destinations. Staff use a range of specialised approaches, informed by other professionals, to ensure that particular needs are met.
- You have rightly recognised that some elements of the curriculum need strengthening and bringing together. Leaders and trustees are very ambitious to develop all pupils' full potential in learning, so that they are well prepared for adult life. At times, the overall design of the curriculum does not ensure that pupils are systematically challenged across all key stages with sufficient planned opportunities to deepen and extend their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the high quality of teaching and learning is consistent across all activities of the school day
- the intent and implementation of the curriculum are clarified, and that all pupils are systematically challenged and have opportunities to deepen and extend their learning.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leaders, teachers, other staff and the co-chairs of the board of trustees. We observed learning in classrooms and looked at pupils' work. We spoke with members of the school council and other pupils informally. We scrutinised documentation from the school on a range of matters, including safeguarding and school improvement. Inspectors took account of 16 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and their additional comments through free text. We also considered responses from staff to the Ofsted online survey.