

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Joe Cowell  
Headteacher  
Wollaston School  
Irchester Road  
Wollaston  
Wellingborough  
Northamptonshire  
NN29 7PH

Dear Mr Cowell

### **Short inspection of Wollaston School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Stephen Long, 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 February 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school as headteacher, in September 2014, you have secured improvements to the quality of teaching, and pupils' personal development and achievement. Pupils, staff and parents are proud of their school. Of the 158 parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, 94% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My child is happy at the school', and 92% indicated that they would recommend the school to other parents. Many of the parents who responded to the Ofsted free-text service commented very positively on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided. One, typifying the views of many others, commented, 'My children are happy, engaged and love being involved in the many life enhancing extra-curricular activities and opportunities that Wollaston offers.' A few parents, particularly of pupils in Year 7, said they would like their children to receive more homework.

The pupils inspectors met with were polite, articulate and keen to tell us about their school. They told us that behaviour is almost always very good and that poor behaviour affects their learning only rarely. You and your staff are ensuring that the school's vision of 'creating a climate where learning can flourish' is met. In the lessons visited by inspectors, the strong relationships between staff and pupils made a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. The pupils were motivated, well behaved and keen to join in discussions about their work.

You and your staff have secured improvements to the quality of teaching since the last inspection. You have rewritten the school's teaching and learning policy and restructured the school's leadership to help remedy some of the weaker aspects of teaching identified at the previous inspection. Inspectors' discussions with pupils, observations of learning and scrutiny of their work show that they are now mostly challenged very well. Teachers are skilled at asking questions which demand that pupils think hard about their answers. They will often ask pupils to expand on their ideas or challenge them to justify their answers more convincingly.

You have also strengthened the school's curriculum to ensure that it supports learning effectively. Pupils now have more time to complete practical and investigative work than in the past. You have increased the time allocated to English and mathematics and to the subject options that pupils choose in key stage 4. Most pupils are also taught by one teacher in each of their subjects other than where specialist expertise is required. This has increased the consistency of teaching and enabled you to hold teachers to account more effectively for their pupils' achievement.

The changes have brought about notable improvements to pupils' achievement. Strong achievement in English and mathematics has been sustained. From starting points which are typically average, the proportion of pupils achieving good GCSE grades in both English and mathematics is consistently higher than the national average. The improved achievement that is seen in other subjects has resulted in a year-on-year increase in the proportion of pupils completing Year 11 with a good suite of GCSE qualifications. You recognise that achievement in science, however, has not been good enough. Effective work is being done to remedy this and the improved progress pupils are now making in science is helping to ensure that they catch up quickly.

The extra support provided to disadvantaged pupils and to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well managed overall. The leaders responsible do not always make use of all of the information they hold, however, to assess what difference the things they are doing is making. The poor quality of the pupil premium funding report on the school website does not reflect the effective work being done to support disadvantaged pupils. It does, however, hinder the ability of governors to hold the school fully to account for the spending decisions that are made.

The school's website is informative and helpful to parents, containing particularly useful information about the curriculum and, increasingly, information about their children's attainment and progress. It does not currently meet the requirements set out by the Department for Education, however. For example, information about the school's strategy for the use of the pupil premium funding is not sufficiently detailed.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils from harm are strong. Training for staff has ensured that they are very alert to signs that a pupil might be at risk. Records show that staff are prepared to raise concerns with senior colleagues, even if these seem to be of a minor nature. Leaders respond quickly and effectively when any such concerns are brought to their attention, including, sometimes, as a result of pupils sharing worries about their friends.

Leaders respond well to the changing nature of the potential risks to pupils' welfare. They have ensured, for example, that staff and pupils are well informed about the signs that children might be at risk of sexual exploitation. Leaders are quick to involve the police and social services where they have concerns. Their swift intervention ensures that pupils at risk quickly receive the help and protection they need. Leaders are also very well informed about their duties to prevent pupils being drawn into extremism or radicalisation. They ensure, for example, that Year 11 pupils receive specialist teaching on right-wing extremism, including through input by the police and others with first-hand knowledge of this issue.

The wide range of pupils the inspectors met with included pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have experienced mental health difficulties. All of the pupils reported that they feel safe and well supported at school. They said that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively if ever it occurs. A very small minority of pupils who completed the Ofsted online survey indicated that they were not always confident the school tackled bullying quickly enough. Inspectors found that the school's logs are carefully maintained and that where bullying is reported, effective and timely action is taken to stop it.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, inspectors looked closely at how well the school ensures equality of opportunity for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also looked at the quality of teaching and learning in science and students' achievement in the sixth form.
- Inspectors found that the school's arrangements to support disadvantaged pupils are effective. The attainment of these pupils has risen considerably since the last inspection. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining good GCSEs in both English and mathematics has risen from 28% in 2014 to 60% last year. Well over half of the Year 11 disadvantaged pupils achieved a range of good passes in their GCSE qualifications last year, including in English and mathematics, compared to just a quarter in 2014.
- Good use has been made of the pupil premium funding to provide smaller class sizes in English and mathematics and to facilitate extra teaching for disadvantaged pupils, including, where necessary, through one-to-one tutoring. Extra learning support staff have been recruited to provide additional help in

lessons to disadvantaged pupils who need it.

- Leaders do not yet, however, make full use of all of the information they hold about disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the actions being taken are equally effective in ensuring equality of opportunity. For example, the careful analysis of pupils' attendance, carried out by heads of year, is not collated by senior leaders to provide a clear overview of how well disadvantaged pupils are attending. Leaders and governors have not explored why disadvantaged pupils are far less likely to take up the school's revised modern foreign languages offer than other pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Strong transition arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils with additional needs are able to settle quickly into Year 7. Regular testing by staff ensures that they are able to spot pupils' emerging needs, including where they have not previously been identified. Inspectors looked very carefully at the school's detailed records of the support provided for pupils with the most complex needs. These show that referrals to specialists are carried out quickly and appropriately when they are warranted. They also highlight leaders' tenacity in seeking the support of external agencies where needed, often in the face of resistance due to pressures on resources.
- In the lessons observed, the pupils who have special educational needs received good-quality support, including through the highly skilled learning support assistants who are carefully deployed to make the most of their individual skills and expertise. Inspectors spoke to pupils experiencing a range of difficulties with their physical or mental health. All reported that they are well supported by the school, including through the learning resource hub.
- You and your staff have made changes to the science curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs, interests and abilities of pupils more effectively than before. You recognise that, in the past, teaching in key stage 3 has not ensured that all pupils begin their GCSE courses with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding. You also know that pupils have not always been guided on to the right courses in key stage 4. For example, in the past, some pupils have pursued a GCSE in physics without having the necessary aptitude in mathematics. You are tackling these weaknesses effectively and ensuring that the quality of teaching in science is monitored on a weekly basis. You have ensured that pupils' coursework is of much higher quality than before.
- Inspectors visited 10 science lessons and spoke to pupils about their work in science. In the lessons observed, the pupils were well engaged, enthusiastic and learning well. In the Year 11 lessons seen, the pupils revised for their GCSE examinations very effectively as a result of the varied and imaginative tasks their teachers had provided. None of the pupils who spoke with inspectors identified science to be a weakness in the school. The improvements made by the school and seen by inspectors indicate that achievement in science is rising quickly.
- The sixth form is a key strength of the school and almost all students achieve well from their different starting points. The most able sixth-form students achieve particularly well and over 50% of grades at A level in 2016 were at

grades A\* to B. Students achieved particularly well in A-level chemistry, French, mathematics and in the extended project qualification. Leaders know that there remains some variation in achievement between different subjects, however. This results in achievement overall which is in line with, rather than better than, the national average. Achievement in vocational subjects is consistently strong.

- Sixth-form students are excellent ambassadors for the school overall and the sixth form in particular. They speak very positively about the quality of teaching they receive and have a strong understanding of what they need to do to achieve their target grades in their examinations. Sixth-form students benefit from an excellent range of enrichment opportunities. These contribute well to their strong personal development. They also benefit from high-quality careers information, advice and guidance, including strong support for their university applications as well as information about apprenticeships.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the reporting of provision for disadvantaged pupils to parents and to governors is strengthened, particularly so that governors can challenge school leaders effectively about the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding
- they make better use of the wide range of information they hold about disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the school is securing equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work to support disadvantaged pupils
- the improvements seen to the quality of teaching and learning in science quickly result in achievement rising to be in line with the good achievement seen in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11
- the school's website fully meets the requirements for the publication of information set out by the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, other leaders and governors. We spoke to pupils formally and informally. We visited lessons to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence, including those relating to safeguarding and pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement. We took account of the 158 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 105 comments made by parents through the Ofsted free-text survey. Inspectors also took account of 167 pupil and 31 staff responses to the online surveys.