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Mr Andy Hodgkinson
Headteacher
The Sweyne Park School
Sir Walter Raleigh Drive
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Dear Mr Hodgkinson

No formal designation inspection of The Sweyne Park School

Following my visit with David Davies, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because you have added an extra key stage to the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks of staff and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, a group of sixth-form students, three members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.

Inspectors scrutinised the school improvement plan, self-evaluation documentation, progress data and a report following a visit by the regional schools commissioner.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Senior leaders and governors have established an effective sixth form.

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is a larger-than-average secondary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. There are fewer pupils who speak English as an additional language than average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or and education, health and care plan is above average. The school has a resourced provision for pupils with hearing impairment. The school has formed a multi-academy trust with one primary school with effect from 1 October 2017.

Effectiveness of the new sixth form

Along with the deputy headteacher and head of sixth form, you have established an effective sixth form which now better meets the needs of sixth-form students. You explained that when you initially introduced a new sixth form, the purpose was threefold: to fill an identified gap in academic provision locally; to be fully inclusive and to raise pupils' aspirations.

You acknowledge in your self-evaluation document and sixth-form improvement plan that you were not sufficiently selective when opening the sixth form, bearing in mind that the majority of courses were academic. Hence, students' outcomes were well below average in your first year of advanced level outcomes in 2016.

You have created two permanent positions for the heads of Year 12 and 13. These members of staff have received high-quality training, and along with the head of sixth form, are adept at monitoring the effectiveness of the sixth-form provision. Between them, they are able to provide an appropriate degree of support and challenge to the sixth-form team.

The sixth form students enjoy school and attend regularly. Attendance for 2016 to 2017 was just over 95%. You have strong systems in place to work with students whose attendance is at risk of falling below 95%. Additionally, any student whose cumulative lateness exceeds 60 minutes, is required to make up this lost time through additional study. You have also worked hard to improve the regularity of communication with students' parents, keeping them informed of their children's progress and arranging additional events to help them to support their children at home with their studies. The sixth-form centre provides a pleasant area in which students are able to study as well as socialise.

The new sixth form offers an appropriate curriculum for the students you wish to recruit. You offer a wide range of up to 24 academic courses, including further mathematics, Mandarin Chinese and psychology. Your choice of three different types of pathways in the sixth form allows students to choose courses of study and the way their progress is assessed. Your 'UCAS pathway', the most popular,

prepares students for higher education, whereas your 'professional pathway' prepares them for the world of work or an apprenticeship. For students who have not yet decided, you allow them to keep their options open by offering them an 'open pathway'. You strongly encourage students to gain the extended project qualification in order to develop their analytical and research skills. Additionally, you expect all students for whom it is appropriate to sit the advanced supplementary examination in their chosen subjects in Year 12, as you believe this prepares them well for their advanced level examinations, as well as providing you with a tool to measure their progress in the subject.

You have wisely established systems to improve the skills of your teachers so that they are able to deliver post-16 courses confidently. This work is ongoing and it is important to continue this focus as the sixth form continues to grow. You have also actively encouraged several of your staff to become advanced level examiners in the subjects they teach. This gives them a deeper insight into how their subjects will be assessed. You have also encouraged your teachers to work collaboratively in groups of three, where they discuss effective aspects of teaching methodology and share this with their colleagues. It is important that this strategy continues in order to reduce variation in the quality of teaching.

You have put together a comprehensive 16 to 19 study programme which is supplemented through a varied enrichment programme, typically on Wednesday afternoons. This programme offers students the opportunity to do work experience in primary schools or to volunteer in charity shops. In addition, they can support teachers in the classroom by working with pupils in key stage 3, take part in sporting activities or learn Mandarin Chinese for beginners. Students' leadership skills are further developed through joining the sixth-form leadership team or becoming subject ambassadors where they act as good role models for the subject in question. My meeting with the two members of staff who oversee careers education was fruitful. Students are carefully guided and supported whatever their destination. Students' destination information shows that many proceed to study at universities, including Oxford or Cambridge, and others move on to apprenticeships or employment.

You track all students' progress regularly and thoroughly, particularly those who are disadvantaged and in receipt of a bursary. You have focused sharply on subjects in which students underachieved in 2016. As a result of more intensive monitoring, challenge and support for staff, and the provision of more high-quality professional development, students' outcomes improved in the majority of subjects in 2017, compared to 2016. Notably, students made better progress in 2017 in English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, psychology and in government and politics. You exceeded the target you had set yourself regarding students' progress in 2017. However, you acknowledge that further improvements are required to bring progress in all subjects at least in line with the national average. Students' progress in vocational subjects is typically very strong. Form tutors play a major role in counselling and mentoring students and maintain a record of their development as

an individual.

Inspectors' visits to sixth-form lessons to observe students' learning and progress confirmed teachers' strong subject knowledge and good awareness of most students' individual learning needs. It was also evident that students are expected to problem-solve in lessons and to work out the answers for themselves, rather than being provided with them too quickly by their teachers. Some teaching does not yet consistently provide a sufficient degree of challenge, particularly for the most able students.

Members of the governing body share your commitment to make the sixth form highly effective. They articulated your plan in their meeting with me, and correctly identified the reasons why the provision did not get off to the best start. Reassuringly, they also understand what needs to be done to maintain and sustain the improvements and are able to speak knowledgeably about the impact of your actions to date.

Safeguarding is effective. Staff have received up-to-date training in all relevant safeguarding matters, including the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have a very good awareness of issues which might compromise the safety of all pupils in the school, including students in the sixth form.

Inspectors' scrutiny of records relating to child protection shows that systems and procedures are thorough, and actions taken are logged in well-maintained records, including details of any resolution.

Staff who have responsibility for safeguarding are known by all employees and students, and their names are clearly displayed at various points throughout the school. Display boards targeting students publicise organisations that can provide guidance and support in relation to students' well-being, including their mental health.

External support

The school maintains a positive relationship with the local authority. Representatives of the local authority are equally positive about the school and, in particular, the quality of the sixth-form provision.

The local authority conducted a review of the sixth form in December 2016 which was commissioned by the headteacher. This was followed by a visit to the school by the Department for Education in March 2017. Both visits referred to improvements in the sixth form provision, as well as identifying further areas for development. The school has taken both reports seriously and has plans in place to address the issues identified.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the progress pupils make, and eliminate any variation between subjects, by:
 - ensuring that teachers of all sixth-form subjects receive high-quality professional development
 - making sure that the most able students are consistently challenged through the teaching they receive
 - sharing the good practice that exists in subjects where students already make substantial progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the regional schools commissioner. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector