

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 April 2019

Mr Keith Stride and Mr Gerry Bennett
Joint Headteachers
Overton Grange School
36 Stanley Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM2 6TQ

Dear Mr Stride and Mr Bennett

Short inspection of Overton Grange School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019 with Susan Cox and Desmond Deehan, 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 January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

You and the leadership team have provided stability and continuity for the school following the departure of the previous headteacher. Staff, parents and carers are positive about your leadership and you have the clear support of governors. Staff, pupils and parents who responded to the Ofsted surveys are proud of the school and its traditions. The large majority of respondents confirm that they believe that pupils are safe and happy at school.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has responded to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. This is evident from the improvement in pupils' progress in their GCSE outcomes in 2018 when compared with 2017. For example, leaders have improved progress for almost all pupils in science, including those with the lowest starting points. However, leaders recognise that there is more work to do to bring about sustained improvement in those previously identified areas.

A number of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey said that leaders need to do better in ensuring consistently effective behaviour in lessons. The behaviour of pupils observed by us during the inspection was generally appropriate. However, pupils reported that low-level disruption sometimes interrupts learning in lessons, particularly in lower-ability sets. We also saw some evidence of this. Leaders are in the process of reviewing school systems to improve the consistency of behaviour in all lessons further.

The attendance of pupils is now broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are persistently absent from school remains above the national average. However, it is lower than it was the previous year. Leaders have identified this as an important area for further improvement.

Governors are committed to providing support and challenge for the senior leadership team. They are aware that some governors would benefit from additional training to build their confidence in strategic matters. This will add further capacity to the ability of governors to support the school effectively as well as to support succession planning. Governors are keen to explore effective practice in other schools, for example through the link established with the University of Brighton Trust, to enable sharper strategic reflection by the board.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose and that records are suitably detailed. Pupils said that staff are approachable if there is something that troubles them or that they need to share. You, together with your staff and governors, ensure that the safety and well-being of pupils is a priority. Staff follow the school's systems and processes carefully to support pupils' welfare.

Staff and governors are clear about their safeguarding roles, and work effectively with parents and external agencies to keep pupils safe. Staff have received appropriate information and training covering all the statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- First, we looked at the action leaders have taken to improve the attendance of pupils. This was because rates of absence were slightly higher in the school compared with the national average for all pupils in 2018. The number of pupils who are persistently absent was higher than national rates in 2017 and 2018. It was also noted as an area for improvement in the previous inspection report.
- Leaders have responded to pupils' absence swiftly following a review of pastoral systems. There is now an expectation that tutors will contact families on the first day of absence. This is starting to encourage better attendance by pupils. Governors and school leaders have identified this as an area for continued focus.
- Leaders analyse attendance information thoroughly to pick up on trends. This enables leaders to provide accurate information regarding the impact of their strategies.
- Second, we looked at the actions taken by leaders to improve the behaviour of pupils. In particular, we looked at leaders' strategies to reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions. This was because fixed-term exclusions were above the national average in 2016 and 2017. School information shows that the number of fixed-term exclusions fell in 2018 as a consequence of developments to the approach to behaviour and the sanctions applied. For example, the use of the 'isolation

room' enables leaders to maintain expectations of appropriate behaviour and ensure that the sanctions given are more proportionate. This strategy also supports the school's desire to be inclusive as pupils remain in school and learning. Leaders are rightly considering using this strategy on a full-time basis rather than the one day a week at present.

- Staff and parents who responded to the Ofsted survey were overwhelmingly positive about pupils' behaviour. Pupils themselves were less positive, although the majority said that they thought behaviour was good. Pupils' behaviour is better when teachers use the systems for managing behaviour consistently. Leaders have introduced additional rewards to encourage and support positive behaviour, which is appreciated by pupils.
- Third, we looked at how leaders have developed the curriculum to improve the progress of boys at key stage 4. This was because boys made significantly less progress in their GCSE courses in 2018 when compared with girls. Attitudes to learning from girls and boys were seen as equally positive on the day of the inspection. Boys make less progress than girls when work in class is not challenging enough. Leaders are aware that there needs to be a more consistent approach to ensuring that all pupils are provided with work that matches their individual needs.
- School assessment information suggests that while girls are likely to make more progress than boys in the 2019 GCSE examinations, the gap between them reduces for the current Year 10 pupils. The gap between girls and boys reduces further for pupils in key stage 3. Leaders believe that this is as a result of a new plan for teachers' professional development. This includes a peer-observation programme to enable the most effective teachers to work directly with their colleagues, leading to a more consistent approach to teaching. Leaders rightly state that this requires further development so that all teachers can deliver high-quality learning opportunities for pupils.
- Finally, we looked at what leaders have done to ensure consistently strong progress in the sixth form. This was because there were some inconsistencies in outcomes in 2018 and students on vocational programmes made significantly less progress compared with their peers on academic courses.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the relative strengths and areas for improvement in the sixth form. Intervention programmes have been implemented in response to any identified weakness in subject provision along with a more robust system for tracking students' progress. As a result, school assessment information indicates that progress in 2019 will be stronger for both vocational and academic programmes. For example, we saw some highly effective support for Year 13 vocational students. The teachers planned effectively to provide appropriate tasks which accurately matched students' ability. As a result, students were supported in becoming more independent learners and they made strong progress. Leaders rightly identify the need to make such practice consistent across all subjects.
- Students were positive about their experience in the sixth form and the level of support they received for their studies and future development. Typical of many, one student said, 'Lessons are hard enough but not so much it scares you off.'

The school is proud of the very high number of students who go on to study at university or undertake training after leaving school. Students feel listened to and appreciate the opportunities to become involved in the wider life of the school, for example as academic mentors to younger pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils of all abilities, and particularly boys with middle prior attainment, make rapid progress by planning activities in all lessons which are consistently well matched to pupils' needs
- the strategy to ensure that all pupils have excellent attendance is sustained
- the behaviour policy is applied consistently to reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions further.

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

Yours sincerely

David Boyle
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, to discuss the work of the school. I also held a separate meeting with representatives of the governing body. We held informal conversations with pupils and staff. We visited 20 classes jointly with members of your senior leadership team, across all key stages. We analysed a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and aspects of the development plan; assessment and attendance information; safeguarding information; and school policies and procedures. We checked information on the school's website. We considered the views of 109 parents who replied to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the views of 62 staff and 484 pupils who responded to the Ofsted survey.