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Mr Harry French  
Principal  
Ash Green School  
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West Midlands  
CV7 9AH

Dear Mr French

### **Short inspection of Ash Green School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 March 2017 with Gwendoline Onyon, 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 it was judged to be good in May 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Above-average attainment has been sustained across the majority of subjects at key stage 4, and rates of progress are good for most pupils. Those pupils who join the school with below the expected standards in literacy and numeracy for their age are well supported, and almost all catch up with their peers in Year 7.

You took over as principal in September 2016 and there have been a number of staff changes since that time. You accept that there are still a number of improvements to be made at the school. You are determined that everyone has higher expectations of pupils. As a result, a culture of ambition is being built within the school community. You, the senior leaders and other leaders at the school have a shared vision and convincingly demonstrated drive, determination and capacity to improve the school.

You identified that behaviour needed to be better when you arrived at the school. Following the introduction of a new behaviour policy, staff and pupils agree that standards of behaviour are now better. The school provides an orderly and welcoming ethos. Pupils are polite and courteous around the school. They were well behaved in the lessons we visited and engaged enthusiastically with their learning.

The school is popular with pupils and their parents. A majority of parents agree that their children are well looked after and well taught, and make good progress at school. A large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to other parents.

Pupils are complimentary about the school. They value the support that they receive from teachers, which helps them to learn and achieve well. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported and enjoy their work. Staff and pupils agree that the school is a friendly and inclusive community, where everyone is valued.

Inspectors in their last report noted that the school should make improvements in some aspects of teaching and learning. Since then, the school has implemented revised assessment procedures and leaders have worked hard to secure other improvements. You have introduced a teaching and learning development group to lead further improvements in teaching quality. They lead regular briefings, the sharing of best practice and coaching programmes. Continuing professional development is tailored to suit individual teachers' needs. Weaker practice has been addressed through performance management procedures.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school through the effective systems that are in place. Leaders, including governors, take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Detailed records are maintained. The school works closely with a range of other agencies when necessary and referral processes are robust and secure. All staff receive training across a range of areas, including training to keep pupils safe from extremism. Staff receive regular updates about safeguarding. Pastoral leaders and other staff work closely together to support vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe from a variety of risks. Tutorial sessions, personal, social and health education lessons, and assemblies are used for this purpose. Pupils feel safe in school. They say that if bullying happens, it is reported and dealt with robustly. However, parental feedback shows that a few parents are concerned about how effectively leaders tackle bullying.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They are aware of its strengths and of those areas that need to improve further. Governors provide effective challenge to leaders. They scrutinise information about achievement, attendance, behaviour and teaching and ask leaders searching questions.

- Examination results in 2016 showed that most pupils made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Disadvantaged pupils made progress in line with that of other pupils nationally. This is a noticeable improvement on the progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2015. It is the result of leaders, governors and staff working closely together to raise outcomes. The spending of pupil premium funding is effectively planned and evaluated by school leaders and governors. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made more progress than those with similar starting points.
- You are aware that GCSE results in 2016 show that pupils with high prior attainment do not make as much progress as pupils from other starting points. The progress of these pupils has been made a priority in school development plans. Leaders have introduced more aspirational targets to ensure that all pupils aim for the highest levels of achievement. Teachers are expected to plan learning activities that provide additional challenge for high-ability pupils.
- Leaders carefully and robustly track pupils' progress. The progress of different groups of pupils, including those who may be falling behind, is scrutinised in regular meetings between senior and middle leaders. Your analysis of assessment information shows that the large majority of current pupils in all years are making sufficient progress towards very challenging targets. Most pupils' books showed high-quality work, in line with age-related and GCSE expectations. This supports the school's evidence that pupils are currently making good progress
- You are keen to ensure that the school's curriculum is aspirational, providing more opportunities for pupils to follow progression routes to university and apprenticeships. Plans are being implemented to enhance the broad curriculum that exists at key stages 3 and 4. More time has been allocated to core subjects in key stage 3, and planning to develop this part of the curriculum is ongoing. Pathways are being introduced at key stage 4 in order to more effectively meet the needs of different ability groups. Almost all key stage 4 pupils will follow the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects in future.
- Through extensive mapping, you ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is delivered over a planned programme and throughout the curriculum. Fundamental British values are promoted well through a range of learning experiences. You provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn outside the formal curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to raise funds for charities, and have opportunities to visit local businesses, theatres, universities, sports events and historical sites. International links with Ghana for sixth-form students are established, and a new link with China will see some pupils travelling there in the next few months. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular and allows pupils to gain recognition at bronze, silver and gold levels.

- Since you arrived, the development of careers education and guidance has been given priority. New leadership of this area has had immediate impact, and provision in this area is now a strength. Pupils' career preferences have been analysed and considered in the context of local labour market information. An extensive programme of activities enables pupils to understand their career options and to make the best decisions for their future education and training. This includes opportunities for advice from an independent careers adviser, advice about apprenticeship opportunities from business and a local college, and work experience for Year 10 pupils.
- You and your leadership team recognise that aspects of outcomes and provision in the sixth form continue to need improvement. New leadership of post-16 provision was established last May. The leadership capacity of the sixth form to bring about improvement to provision and outcomes has been strengthened as a result of these changes. Leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that post-16 students follow the right courses in relation to their achievement and aspirations. New provision for careers education and guidance supports students' choices in the sixth form and beyond. New monitoring procedures track the progress of pupils in Years 12 and 13 and interventions take place as required. Post-16 information is analysed alongside performance data from other years, and subject leaders are held accountable for current outcomes. Planned destinations of current students are more aspirational, with increases in applications for university and higher level apprenticeships.
- In lessons observed, pupils' learning was enhanced through teachers' high expectations. Teachers use progress information well to inform their planning, which is focused on meeting the different learning needs of those in each class. Good relationships exist in lessons, and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work diligently and behave well. Pupils confirmed that this was the case in most lessons. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Attendance overall remains close to the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average, and shows improving trends. Improving attendance has high priority in your development plans.
- You are committed to supporting individual pupils whose behaviour needs to improve. Where pupils are unable to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour, a series of staged responses has been introduced. This includes behaviour plans and use of the internal inclusion unit. Despite this, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high. Leaders are aware of this and are taking urgent and effective action to address the problem.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and achievement of higher ability pupils in all year groups improves
- students' progress on different courses in the sixth form is at least in line with national expectations.

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, we met with you, senior and middle leaders, and other staff. I spoke with one parent and I met with a representative of the Creative Education Trust. We scrutinised a range of documents, including safeguarding policies and the school's analysis of pupils' achievement. Inspectors visited, mostly with school leaders, all year groups to observe teaching and learning across a range of subjects and to look at pupils' work. We met with pupils formally as well as holding informal discussions with them. Inspectors listened to pupils read. They considered the 96 responses to Parent View, and the 37 staff responses to Ofsted's survey.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernice Astling  
**Ofsted Inspector**