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Mrs Sally Morris
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Morris

Short inspection of Manningtree High School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2018 with Brenda Watson, 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

Since your appointment in September 2015, you have continued to improve standards within the school. You and your leadership team have high expectations and as a result you are successfully raising the aspirations of pupils. As a result, the progress and attainment of pupils leaving Year 11 was above average in 2017.

You have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You usefully obtain external validation of the quality of your work through working with other local schools. The school's plans for improvement are targeted at the right areas. However, the milestones you use to measure success towards achieving the goals that you set are not precise enough; as a result, evaluations of their impact often lack detail.

Together with your leadership team you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are now consistently being applied by teachers and pupils are provided with precise advice on how to improve their work. Inspectors saw many examples of pupils being set engaging and challenging work in lessons, including the most able.

Teaching is monitored using a variety of information and you carefully monitor the progress of all groups of pupils. Staff are complimentary about the support they receive to improve their teaching. As a result, teaching is improving and is consistently leading to good outcomes for pupils in most subjects.

The pupils we spoke to were all very positive about their school experience. They told us that they enjoyed school and felt supported by teachers. We observed good pupil behaviour around the school and in lessons. Pupils respond well to staff requests and are keen to succeed.

Governors are appropriately skilled to fulfil their statutory duties. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they monitor standards through the detailed reports they receive from you, their analysis of pupil progress and through visits to the school. Governors hold senior leaders firmly to account and provide a good level of support.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety of pupils is given high priority by senior staff and governors. Staff are trained in the latest guidance and at an appropriate level. The identity of all visitors to the school is carefully checked. All the necessary pre-employment checks are carried out before anyone is allowed to work with pupils.

Staff are aware of the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk and use the correct procedures to report their concerns. The safeguarding lead quickly takes the appropriate action and is tenacious in following up the action taken by other agencies. Pupil files are kept meticulously up to date and are thorough.

All of the pupils who spoke to the inspectors said they felt safe in school, as did most of the pupils who answered the questionnaire. Pupils understand the different types of bullying and are taught how to keep safe when using social media and the internet. Pupils are also provided with workshops on keeping safe in a range of situations. Pupils we spoke to were confident that adults are quick to resolve any incidents of bullying. Most parents agree their children are happy, safe and well looked after in the school. Parents are complimentary about the support provided for their children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, describing it as 'exceptionally good' and saying, 'The special educational needs team have had a massive impact on us supporting our child through the school.'

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked closely at the performance of disadvantaged pupils because their progress is below that of all pupils nationally. Leaders are using the funding they receive to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils to good effect. The money is used to support pupils' learning by providing one-to-one support for pupils so that they quickly catch up with their learning. An identified member of staff is employed to support pupils so that they are able to overcome issues that may hinder their learning. The pupils who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the support they receive.
- I found that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. At the end of key stage 4 in 2017, the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils improved to broadly average. The work produced by disadvantaged pupils currently in the school indicates good progress for those

pupils who attend regularly. There are a small number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school and this is having a negative impact on their progress.

- Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages has been too slow in the past. However, in 2017 it was showing signs of improvement. You have an effective subject leader who is taking effective action to improve progress in French and German. The changes made to teaching and methods of assessment indicate that pupils are acquiring an in-depth understanding of grammar and vocabulary, leading to improved speaking and writing skills. This is evident in work produced from Year 7 to Year 11. Evidence from this inspection suggests that progress in languages is continuing to improve.
- The school is providing pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum was also a key line of enquiry because we wanted to find out if pupils were following a broad curriculum, especially in key stage 3. The two-year key stage 3 curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to develop subject-specific knowledge that prepares them for their GCSE courses. Pupils' work confirmed that pupils in Years 7 and 8 were making good progress across subjects. Pupils told inspectors that they received plenty of useful advice about choosing options and almost all felt they had made the right choice.
- The work in pupils' books indicates that they take pride in their work and teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils have the opportunity to practise and develop their knowledge through more than one subject. For example, they write evaluations in English, science, drama and history. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their learning. Pupils receive good-quality, impartial careers information and as a result a higher-than-average proportion of pupils stay in education, employment and training at post-16.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves
- progress in modern foreign languages continues to improve so that standards rise by the end of Year 11
- improvement and action plans contain precise criteria to measure success to enable more accurate evaluation of their impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your leadership team, the head of modern foreign languages, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. We visited a number of lessons across a range of subjects to look at learning and pupils' behaviour. We were accompanied by senior leaders for most of these visits. We observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at breaktimes and spoke to a number of pupils informally. We met with two groups of pupils. The views of 354 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 84 text responses, were considered. Inspectors considered 53 staff questionnaires and 109 responses to the pupil questionnaires. We evaluated a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, attendance and behaviour logs and school improvement plans.