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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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David Allman and Jeremy Scott
Co-Headteachers
The John Warner School
Stanstead Road
Hoddesdon
Hertfordshire
EN11 0QF

Dear Mr Allman and Mr Scott

Short inspection of The John Warner School

Following the visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The John Warner School provides pupils with strong pastoral care. Pupils told inspectors about how well teachers keep them safe and support their emotional well-being. Parents are very positive about the quality of education provided by staff and feel well informed about the work of the school. This is evident in the comments parents made on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for example: 'a caring school ... great at pastoral care'.

Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for the success of their pupils. You have supported middle leaders to improve the provision in their respective subjects. As a consequence, some curriculum areas such as English and mathematics deliver very effective teaching and learning, and pupils achieve well. This is recognised by parents. As co-headteachers, you have provided a clear vision for the future success of the school, which is delineated in detail in your school improvement plan.

Governance at The John Warner School is effective. Governors provide effective challenge in many areas and support the work of the school where appropriate. They visit the school frequently to gather critical information to shape their understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Most pupils display exemplary behaviour. They are courteous, welcoming and respectful,

both of each other and of staff. Pupils are ambitious to achieve well. Pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form told inspectors how much they appreciate the support and guidance provided by the school to select the most appropriate pathway after their examinations.

You ensure that all pupils have access to a rich and balanced curriculum. For example, many pupils told inspectors about their enthusiasm for engineering. Pupils are appreciative of the opportunities to develop their understanding of robotics, both at school and in regional and global competitions. Pupils also have opportunities to learn a breadth of foreign languages, such as Italian, French, German, Spanish and Mandarin. As a consequence, pupils develop an informed understanding of different cultures.

You ensure that middle leaders and teachers gain an informed understanding of the heightened requirements of the revised GCSE and vocational qualifications. In addition, you also focus on ensuring that teachers' subject knowledge is strong in every area of the curriculum. The previous inspection report identified the importance of raising attainment across the curriculum, particularly in science. You have made sure that the science department is fully staffed with specialist science teachers. As a consequence of your actions, pupils' attainment has increased in many areas of the curriculum, including science.

The previous inspection report also stated the importance of raising achievement in the sixth form. Through an improved focus on attendance, guidance for selecting the most appropriate courses and improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, students' achievements have improved.

You acknowledge that boys do not currently achieve as well as girls in many areas of the curriculum at key stage 4. You also recognise that teaching, learning and assessment in many areas of the curriculum do not consistently meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils. The focus on improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is not currently as precise as you would like it to be. As a consequence, some pupils do not make as much progress from their relative starting points as pupils nationally.

As a result of your considered and reflective leadership, you have revised the behaviour policy for the school, which has resulted in raised expectations and standards. However, an unintended consequence of the increased expectations has been a substantial increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Although most pupils display exemplary behaviour, a minority of pupils have not yet developed strong attitudes towards learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils and students at the sixth form state clearly how well staff ensure their safety and emotional well-being at The John Warner School. Pupils learn about how to keep safe when on the internet. Leaders and staff are not complacent about internet safety and are aware of the continually changing nature of social media and other forums. You and your leadership team, for example, introduced a ban on the use of mobile phones in school. Pupils spoke to inspectors about the impact of the ban on significantly reducing incidents

of cyber-bullying and unsafe behaviours.

All parents and staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaires agreed that pupils are safe, protected and well cared for. Pupils told inspectors that teachers resolve any occurrences of bullying quickly and appropriately. However, not all pupils are able to define the concept of bullying accurately.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school's safeguarding systems and approaches are robust. Records on all adults who work at the school are securely maintained, regularly reviewed and compliant with statutory requirements. Safeguarding leaders, alongside the family support worker, are alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and follow up concerns both swiftly and appropriately.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on students' achievements at the sixth form. Inspection evidence demonstrates that students receive appropriate challenge in their lessons. In a sociology lesson, the teacher's high expectations were met by many students striving to articulate their thoughts about the ideologies that underpin scientific and religious perspectives. Teachers use questions effectively to extend sixth-form students' thinking in a range of subjects and, as a consequence, students' achievements have improved in both academic and vocational subjects.
- Students value the pastoral support provided by staff. They are appreciative of the high-quality careers guidance that helps them make the most appropriate choices for the next stage in their lives. As a result, almost all students secure a place in further education, work or an apprenticeship after sixth form.
- My second key line of enquiry focused on pupils at key stage 4 and sixth-form students' achievements in science. You have addressed the issues with science by ensuring the recruitment of specialist science teachers. As a consequence, pupils enjoy science, as they develop a clear understanding of specific concepts through practical experiments. As a result, progress and attainment in science have improved for all groups of pupils.
- You have addressed historical under-achievement in physics at A level by ensuring that all students take A-level mathematics. Through forensic analysis of the areas that students find difficult, you identify gaps in their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, students' attainment and progress in physics have improved.
- I also focused on how well teaching, learning and assessment meet the needs of all pupils, depending on their different starting points. The previous inspection report raised the importance of teaching enabling all pupils to think more deeply. In some areas of the curriculum, such as English and mathematics, inspection evidence demonstrates strong progress and attainment for many pupils. Pupils develop their skills and knowledge in English very well through challenging questions, clear sequential learning and strong guidance. Pupils attained above the national average in English language and literature in 2016 and 2017.
- You acknowledge that not every area of the curriculum rigorously addresses the

learning needs of all pupils. Observations, inspection of pupils' books and discussions with pupils demonstrate that pupils' different starting points and variable levels of ability are not consistently addressed. As a result, some pupils become passive, disengaged learners as they cannot access the subject easily or do not find the work challenging. Pupils do not make consistently strong progress and attainment in every area of the curriculum.

- You also accept that boys under-achieve significantly in many areas of the curriculum. As a result, you have introduced a focused approach to accelerate boys' progress called 'boys achieve more'. It is too early, however, to evaluate the impact of this approach.
- My penultimate key line of enquiry centred on the achievements of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils make average progress in many areas of the curriculum but do not attain in line with pupils nationally. You acknowledge that many disadvantaged pupils did not historically have access to languages and humanities at key stage 4 and this has now been rectified. However, leaders, including governors, do not ensure that monitoring the achievements of, and support for, disadvantaged pupils has a high enough profile.
- My final key line of enquiry focused on how well pupils are supported to ensure that they are safe both at school and beyond. The school's pastoral support is strong. Pupils feel safe and told inspectors that they felt confident that a member of staff would provide support if they needed it.
- The introduction of a new behaviour policy has raised the standards of behaviour that are deemed acceptable in school. Most pupils comply fully with this code and speak articulately about the impact the policy has had on improving behaviour for learning in class.
- You recognised that the internal isolation unit was not having the desired effect and removed it. However, some pupils' behaviour is particularly challenging and does not conform to the new, heightened expectations. As a consequence, you have issued a significant and increasingly high number of fixed-term exclusions. Many of this small number of pupils are disadvantaged boys who have not yet engaged with the raised expectations of behaviour for learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum accelerate the progress of boys so that they achieve in line with girls
- teaching, learning and assessment meet the needs of all groups of pupils so that pupils achieve well in all areas of the curriculum
- the monitoring of and support for disadvantaged pupils are more rigorous so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well
- pupils' behaviour for learning improves so that the number of fixed-term exclusions reduces.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the course of this inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders and a group of five governors.

Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met with a group of 19 pupils chosen by the school and the student council.

Classes throughout the school were visited by inspectors, accompanied by you.

Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school.

A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; minutes of governor meetings; and curriculum plans.

I considered the views of 122 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views parents expressed via freetext. I also took into account the views of 109 pupils and 74 members of staff.