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Ms Roisin Walsh  
Headteacher  
Dormers Wells High School  
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Dear Ms Walsh

### **Short inspection of Dormers Wells High School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 December 2015 with Gill Bal, 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.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since joining the school in September 2014, you have made significant changes that are already having a very positive impact on the progress made by pupils. You have provided a clear vision for the school, with very high expectations of staff and pupils' conduct and behaviour. You have established a culture of high aspirations for all members of the school community, underpinned by effective systems and structures. A focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment has been your highest priority and is already having significant impact. The appointment of new leaders and teachers and the continuing professional development of all staff has begun to pay dividends. You are right to be proud of the transformation in ethos and outcomes, established under your leadership.

The impressive new school building supports pupils effectively to make good progress. Pupils and learners in the sixth form conduct themselves well. The atmosphere is calm and orderly. Pupils have high aspirations and work hard. Staff know individuals well, and consequently relationships are good throughout. Pupils are proud of their school and the awards they collect for good attendance, hard work and achievement.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified during the inspection in May 2012. Your accurate identification of the areas for further

development and relentless focus on teaching, learning and assessment means that the school development plan clearly and accurately sets out future actions. The governing body fully support the implementation of this plan. The appointment of new and effective middle leaders adds strength to the leadership team, as you strive to deliver further school improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff have received up-to-date child protection training, including training on the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. They know what to do should they be concerned about a pupil. Policies and procedures are understood well and consistently followed. Detailed records are kept of vulnerable pupils and school leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure their well-being. Pupils' attendance is systematically tracked and follow-up work undertaken for any child deemed to be missing from education. Attendance, overall, is very high.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are given appropriate information on how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations both while in school and outside. Pupils are provided with opportunities to discuss issues such as bullying, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Pupils know who to talk to should they be concerned about a friend or themselves. They are confident that any issues will be dealt with quickly by staff. The parents who responded to the online survey Parent View endorsed this view.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders relentlessly focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. This has necessitated the appointment of new staff, the restructuring of current staffing and the provision of a range of professional development opportunities through the 'pedagogy leaders'. As a result, leaders have established an effective learning culture throughout the school. Staff feel supported and highly valued. They are keen to share their ideas and work collaboratively.
- Pupils arrive with levels of attainment that are well below average. Some join in-year across Years 7 to 11 and are well supported. Consequently, pupils make above-average progress across a range of subjects. Current information provided by the school indicates that this rate of progress will continue to be good.
- Progress in English and science has been less strong than in other key areas. The appointment, in September, of two new leaders in these subjects has already had a positive impact. Senior leaders are supporting them to make necessary improvements and, as a result, pupils' progress in English and science has improved. Lessons observed during the inspection showed a high level of challenge for pupils because of teachers' expertise in both these subjects.

- Improving literacy for all pupils is a high priority. The literacy coordinator works across subjects to maximise opportunities for pupils to practise their written and verbal communication. Reading programmes are in place for those who find reading difficult. Those who arrive at the school with little or no knowledge of the English language are supported well and make good progress.
- Following a review of the governing body in February 2015, governors received additional training and their roles and responsibilities were restructured. This has empowered them to become far more challenging to school leaders with regard to pupils' progress and teachers' performance in the classroom. They are knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and know what improvements still need to be made. They share fully the headteacher's vision and work closely with her to ensure that she successfully achieves it.
- The local authority provides the school with appropriate support and guidance. For instance, they have undertaken a subject review in science. This has strengthened school leaders' ability to make rapid changes while sustaining pupils' progress.
- The school runs a specially resourced provision for pupils with hearing impairment for the local authority. Leadership of this provision is good. Staff across the school are given valuable advice about how to support the progress of these pupils. As a consequence, these pupils are fully included in the life of the school and make good progress.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is beginning to develop under the new leadership of this area. Some elements are still in the early stages of development, for instance the implementation of a new tracking system to check individuals' progress. However, training and a commitment to improve this area still further are already having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The number of these pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion from school has dropped dramatically over the past year.
- Pupil premium funding is used in a variety of successful ways and the impact on pupils' progress is regularly checked. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to those nationally in English and mathematics.
- The inclusive sixth form offers a range of A-level and vocational courses, as well as extra-curricular opportunities. Learners are encouraged to act as mentors to younger pupils, which they do enthusiastically. They are smartly dressed, diligent and ambitious. All go on to their chosen universities, apprenticeships or employment.
- You have appointed key middle leaders to deliver further improvements in your school. While these are strong appointments and you have in place a comprehensive mentoring and support programme, they will need time to

become firmly embedded. Middle leaders are complimentary about the support they have received so far from your leadership team.

- You have accurately identified some groups of pupils that aren't making the rapid progress of others in the school. For instance, boys make better progress, across a range of subjects, than boys nationally. However, they do not make as much progress as girls at the school. You are working hard to address this and are already seeing an improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to offer high levels of support and guidance to new middle leaders in order for them to continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects
- they monitor closely the impact of initiatives on the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Ealing. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. They met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes of meetings, information on the progress of pupils and the single central record. Inspectors interviewed one group of pupils and spoke to pupils informally at other times during the inspection. Inspectors visited lessons in science and English, form time and an assembly, to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment.