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Mr Shaun Common
Principal
Copleston High School
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Dear Mr Common

Short inspection of Copleston High School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, HMI, and Jason Howard, HMI, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders at all levels, and governors, are highly effective and are well supported by a committed and passionate staff. Your school is truly inclusive, where pupils are given every opportunity to achieve their best. You pursue what is in the best interests of pupils and, in this, you have been very successful. Improvements in teaching and learning have led to outcomes rising sharply for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. You now want similarly impressive gains for students in the sixth form. Your actions to promote good attendance have worked well; overall attendance is now better than the national average, with many more disadvantaged pupils now attending school regularly. The school is now securely good.

On entering the school, visitors are immediately struck by the calm and welcoming atmosphere. The school was built in 1939, with narrow corridors that struggle to cope with almost 1,800 pupils. However, through care, attention to detail and careful planning, you have made the most of the building and transformed the environment. Everyone moves quickly and carefully around the site. Displays are vibrant; they celebrate pupils' achievement while reinforcing expectations and motivating pupils to achieve more. The corridor for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities deserves a special mention. It sensitively highlights pupils' differences, while providing inspiration at the same time. It is a shining example of the caring, accepting and inclusive nature of the school that permeates throughout.

Through skilful and innovative leadership, you and other leaders have created a culture where pupils want to do well, and they respect and appreciate staff. Equally striking is the strength of the relationships between staff and pupils, and the exemplary behaviour observed throughout the school. Pupils look out for each other while also being polite, responsible and conscientious. They know you have their best interests at heart. They value the rich and highly personalised curriculum that helps them to reach their individual goals and achieve well. The Basketball Academy has enabled nine students to gain valuable scholarships abroad, while three students gained entrance to either Oxford or Cambridge universities last year. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities you provide, at all times throughout the year, because they enhance their learning.

You and other leaders have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. You can articulate strengths very clearly. Equally, you have an in-depth knowledge of the very few areas that need to improve. Leaders explained convincingly the actions they are taking and how they monitor standards. You were able to provide compelling evidence to show that your actions are effective. You lead a cohesive team. Staff morale is high, because you value staff. The overwhelming majority said that they feel proud to work at the school. Pupils, in the main school, and students, in the sixth form, spoke at length about the extra effort that staff make to help them succeed.

Governors contribute significantly to the school's success, and to the strength in leadership and management. They are well informed, highly committed and share your high aspirations for the school. They use their 'skills matrix' well to ensure that they have a good balance of desirable skills and essential experience. They help set the long-term strategic direction for the school, including the recently formed Gippeswyk Community Educational Trust and the imminent new-build project. While exacting over standards, governors provide support and challenge in equal measure so that improvement is continuous. They are keen to celebrate pupils' success at the 'Termly Achievement' assemblies and, through their long-term association with the school, they form valuable connections with the local community.

The overwhelming majority of parents, carers, pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires were extremely positive about the school. Almost all pupils said that they enjoy school and that they enjoy learning. There was not a single pupil who would not recommend the school to a friend moving to the area. Similarly, more than nine out of ten parents said their children are happy, well looked after and make good progress at the school, and they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that the school is an inclusive community where safeguarding is given a very high profile and pupils' welfare and safety is paramount. All safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. Staff are appropriately trained and aware of their responsibilities about identifying when a pupil may need help. Staff register

concerns well and these are handled appropriately and promptly. Case files are detailed and record information accurately. Staff and governors are kept up to date about safeguarding matters and staff work effectively with external agencies. Staff have made explicit the link between attendance and safeguarding and follow up absences systematically.

Pupils said they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They are confident that if an incident occurs, staff will deal with it well. They said that this stems from the school's 'Golden Rules', which instil the value of 'respecting oneself, the environment, and others'. Inspectors noted that, increasingly, pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. They spoke confidently about how to stay safe, including when online, saying they get useful information and guidance through assemblies and personal, social, health and education lessons. Consequently, they said that they are well equipped to recognise and deal with risks effectively. The overwhelming majority of pupils who completed the online questionnaire said that staff encourage them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally.

Inspection findings

- Achievement in the sixth form was an area of focus for this inspection because students' progress in some areas last year had dipped slightly. You have acted quickly to address this. Following an external review, learning conversations with senior leaders check that departmental action plans have been fully implemented. You have adapted the curriculum, restructured tutor groups, appointed subject specialists as tutors, and improved advice and guidance to ensure that the right pupils study the right courses. You have modified the assessment programme, and your improved monitoring systems allow you to better assess the progress current students make. The newly appointed sixth-form director has worked closely with parents and other leaders to check that improvements are sustained.
- Inspection evidence confirms that current students are benefiting from the changes you have made, alongside the good teaching they receive. Students praised the teachers' structured approach in lessons, the clarity of their feedback and the comprehensive support provided outside of lessons. Inspectors noted teachers' secure subject knowledge, the scholarly atmosphere and the strong relationships. They also observed sophisticated discussions that help students to gain a deeper understanding of the work covered. These all promote good learning. Leaders' detailed monitoring of teaching and learning has also helped to improve students' progress, and current predictions show improved outcomes across the curriculum, including in science, English literature, English language and sociology.
- During the inspection, I wanted to check how well you have maintained the high standards of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Inspectors noted your continued focus on ensuring that pupils attend regularly and achieve well. Pupils' behaviour was exemplary. You have achieved a fine balance of giving pupils a relevant curriculum, while raising their aspirations, amid a culture of inclusivity and equality. For example, pupils enjoy the 'Termly Achievement' assemblies where they can celebrate with each other, and the sports day, where everyone can

succeed. Consequently, exclusions and incidents of poor behaviour are rare.

- You track all groups of pupils' attendance across different year groups. Your high expectations, and success in stressing the link between regular attendance and better progress, have paid dividends. Pupils want to come to school because they know they learn well and they want this to continue. The concerted whole-staff effort to work closely with all parents ensures that no group is disadvantaged by poor attendance. Overall attendance is now above the national average, and the attendance rates for all pupil groups are now at least broadly in line with the national averages.
- Our final line of enquiry was to check that standards of teaching, learning and assessment are consistently high for all pupils across the curriculum. Throughout the inspection, we saw teachers who plan lessons well, and pupils who work hard because they are given a variety of challenging activities that fire their imagination. Inspectors noted teachers' good use of their strong subject knowledge, and effective and open questioning to identify misconceptions and extend pupils' knowledge further. Where misconceptions arise, teachers skilfully adapt teaching to provide extra support to pupils who need more help.
- Leaders and teachers have a secure understanding of the individual circumstances, needs and barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils. They use this information well to plan support that allows these pupils to make as much, if not more, progress than their peers with the same starting points.
- Leaders' rigorous, accurate and detailed tracking of pupils' performance helps inform any additional interventions. The well-targeted support that pupils receive helps them quickly to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and allows many more to make rapid and sustained progress. This enables pupils across all year groups to make very strong progress across a wide range of subjects. This was perfectly captured by one sixth-form student who said: 'I came here from primary school as a reasonably able pupil, but now I excel. Copleston has made me into that student.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed the changes in the sixth form so that students can demonstrate improved rates of progress from their different starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

John Randall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you and your two vice-principals to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We spoke informally to staff and pupils, and we held a series of formal meetings with three groups of pupils, middle leaders, and three trustees, including the chair. Also, one inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

We reviewed a wide range of information provided, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, departmental action plans and progress reviews. We scrutinised the school's safeguarding, staff recruitment and child protection procedures. We visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in a number of classes across all key stages. I also looked at 92 responses to Parent View, 40 responses to the pupil survey, and 110 staff survey returns.