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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Anne Cullum
Principal
Heathside School
Brooklands Lane
Weybridge
Surrey
KT13 8UZ

Dear Mrs Cullum

Short inspection of Heathside School

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 2018 with Ann Fearon and Ian Bauckham, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your principled and aspirational leadership embeds a culture of strong pastoral care and high academic standards. Heathside is a harmonious school where everyone pulls together to do their best. Morale among pupils and teachers is high. Pupils we spoke to said that they valued the strong sense of community and felt that they were listened to. Your staff share your vision, and work very hard to maintain the school's many strengths and to improve it further. Staff told inspectors that they feel very well supported and receive helpful training. There is a caring and stimulating ethos which enables pupils typically to make strong progress and achieve well. Parents speak very highly of the school. The great majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

You, your leadership team and governors are ambitious for pupils and carefully consider their best interests in everything you do. Leaders use meticulous systems to assess and track pupils' progress regularly. This ensures that any pupil at risk of falling behind is quickly spotted. A wide range of additional help is then provided to help pupils who need to catch up. However, your focus goes well beyond ensuring that pupils leave the school with good examination results. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their mental health, has a high priority and is very well provided for at your school.

The atmosphere in your school is calm and purposeful. The behaviour of the great

majority of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are kind and respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school, wear their uniforms smartly and take good care of the environment. Pupils appreciate the wide range of clubs and other activities on offer. This includes a large variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical, artistic and dramatic talents. Pupils also value the opportunities to develop their leadership skills and make a helpful contribution to the running of the school. For example, the student impact team plays an important role in promoting mutual respect across the school.

Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make strong progress in most subjects and achieve GCSE and A-level results which are above the national average. By the end of key stage 4, pupils' progress across the curriculum has been consistently above the national average. This is particularly the case for most-able pupils, who have made exceptional progress in their GCSEs in recent years. The progress made by middle- and lower-attaining GCSE pupils and high prior attaining A level students, is in line with the national average. Outcomes in English, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, have improved significantly and are now convincingly above average.

Leaders and governors understand clearly the school's many strengths and the key priorities for further improvement. You recognise that some groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, do not achieve the same high outcomes as other pupils. Also, there is some variability in the quality of teaching, which means that pupils do not achieve the same high standards in some of the subjects they can choose, as they do in their core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. All staff and governors receive appropriate training that ensures that they know how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

A dedicated and highly skilled team of staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside pupils, parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff closely monitor their welfare. Case studies discussed with inspectors showed evidence of regular and thorough liaison with external providers to ensure that the safety of pupils is rigorously checked.

Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being. Pupils told inspectors that staff are approachable, saying that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. In particular, pupils recognised the recent improvements that have been made to the security of the school site. Parents who responded to the online survey overwhelmingly agreed that their children feel safe and are well cared for in school.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for managing their own safety. A comprehensive

and well-structured programme of activities delivered through lessons, tutor time and assemblies supports pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. The pupils that inspectors spoke to had a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

The school has been particularly proactive in supporting mental health. A lead teacher for mental health and well-being has been appointed and is providing valuable support for some pupils.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have prioritised increasing the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils, and they rigorously monitor the progress of this group of pupils. Additional pupil premium funding is targeted carefully and extra help is making a positive difference to pupils' progress. Although in 2017 the progress of disadvantaged pupils declined overall, it remained in line with the national average for other pupils. This was largely due to a small number of pupils who attended school alternative provision, resulting in them completing fewer GCSEs.
- Assessment information provided by school leaders shows that disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum in key stage 4, and differences are being diminished in the attainment of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are also attending school more regularly than they have in the past. The school's assessment information shows that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is more variable in key stage 3. In Year 8, disadvantaged pupils are making less progress than their non-disadvantaged peers, although these differences are reduced in Year 9.
- Teachers are aware of the disadvantaged pupils who may need extra support, and ensure that their progress is carefully checked. When this happens, the pupils get down to work and achieve as well as others. However, sometimes they make less progress than others and occasionally have incomplete and untidy work.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported and make progress that is broadly similar to other pupils. Leaders ensure that staff have a good awareness of the individual learning needs of this group of pupils. Inspectors observed learning support assistants providing helpful support to pupils in lessons to ensure that they learn well. The 'Hurry to Heathside' programme provides effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to settle into school and make good progress when they join in Year 7.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and the impact it has on the progress of pupils effectively. A carefully planned training programme provides opportunities for teachers to work together to share what works best in lessons. Staff appreciate the opportunity to work in small groups, trialling new strategies to enable them to fully reflect on and improve their practice.
- In lessons, teachers have high expectations and plan tasks that encourage pupils to participate well. Most teachers use questioning increasingly well to challenge pupils and probe their understanding. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, lower-attaining pupils were increasingly confident explaining eutrophication (the

impact of excessive plant growth in water systems) because they were constantly challenged to use specialist vocabulary accurately. Occasionally, when teaching is less effective, the pace of learning slows, some pupils make less progress, and they get distracted from their learning.

- Leaders' focus on increasing the stretch and challenge for the most able students in the sixth form is having a positive impact. Assessment information shows this group is now achieving higher outcomes than it has in the recent past. Students told inspectors that they felt very well supported. Retention rates are very strong. In lessons, inspectors observed students successfully tackling challenging tasks in most lessons. For example in a Year 13 geography lesson, the teacher's high expectations of the most-able students spurred them on to clearly improve their answers to an exam question.
- The curriculum provides a high level of challenge for all pupils and ensures that they are well prepared for the next steps in their education. You are firm in your conviction that pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience success in taking academically challenging GCSE subjects. For example, the numbers of pupils successfully completing a modern foreign languages course are high and increasing. You have taken action to withdraw the college courses that some pupils were taking because the courses had little value and success rates were poor. New courses have been added in the sixth form to meet student demand, including the Extended Project Qualification, which provides additional challenge for the most able students.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strong teaching that exists in most areas is firmly embedded so that all groups make sustained and substantial progress
- disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress so that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils diminishes further.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders, staff and governors. We spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally. We visited classes in key stages 3, 4 and 5 to observe learning, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed

pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. A range of documents and policies was considered, including leaders' self-evaluation, information about current pupils' progress, safeguarding information and evidence of the work of governors. The inspection team took account of the 123 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 76 responses to the Ofsted staff survey. Inspectors also considered the 196 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.