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Mr Stephen Holland
Principal
The Steiner Academy Hereford
Much Dewchurch
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Dear Mr Holland

Short inspection of The Steiner Academy Hereford

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2018 with David Hughes, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is because leaders seek continuously to make the school the best it can be. You, your senior team and governors have an accurate view about the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes. You have a shared understanding of what could be better and a clear plan to achieve this. For example, you have identified the reasons why pupils' impressive progress in English is not replicated in mathematics. Your planned strategy to increase some non-specialist teachers' confidence in teaching the subject is appropriate.

Your senior leaders keep a close eye on teaching and hold staff to account for its quality. Where they find weaknesses, leaders give clear and helpful guidance to teachers. This usually makes a difference and teaching improves. You have, correctly, identified that some teaching needs to improve further before it mirrors the high quality of the rest. For example, you know that most teachers use good knowledge about what pupils can do to plan work that is appropriately challenging. Skilful teaching in these classes ensures that pupils reach high standards and develop understanding beyond that which is typical for their ages. This was highly evident in English and science lessons in the upper school during the inspection. However, you are aware that not all teachers are this skilled. Some do not pitch work appropriately. They set tasks that are too hard for some pupils and too easy for others. You are taking appropriate action to iron out these differences.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have fundamentally re-thought the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour. In particular, leaders have considered how

better to support pupils who have substantial social and emotional difficulties that make it hard for them to settle into school life. Well-trained staff provide sensitive and effective support for these pupils. As a result, most grow in confidence and overcome their anxieties. Most pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school site. The only exceptions to this happen when teaching is not well pitched to the abilities of some younger pupils. When this happens, some pupils become restless and chatty.

Leaders are deeply committed to the Steiner principles that underpin the school's work. As a result, leaders have created an ethos that strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a broad, rich, interesting curriculum that emphasises the development of their physical and emotional well-being. The way the school is organised provides a close-knit, family-like community. This means that staff know each individual pupil very well. Pupils flourish in this environment. They are confident, self-assured and self-motivated learners, hungry to explore and broaden their knowledge. Pupils enjoy the school. They say that they have no concerns about being bullied. They feel safe, cared for and well supported.

Safeguarding is effective.

The deep sense of care that is central to the school's ethos means that all staff are continuously tuned into pupils' emotional states. They are sensitive to indicators that all may not be well and act quickly when something is of concern. Leaders make sure that serious concerns are reported to relevant agencies appropriately. The close relationship that exists between the school and families ensures that those who need help get the right support. In this way, leaders have ensured that the practical arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose.

Leaders have worked with the local authority to review the strength of the school's safeguarding arrangements. As a result, the safeguarding policy has been updated and now fully reflects current government guidance. Leaders have begun to renew the system for recording concerns and communicating confidential information. However, leaders have not tackled this process with the urgency that was necessary. Therefore, weaknesses in the system remain. While these do not put pupils at risk, they mean that essential information is not readily available to those who may need it.

Inspection findings

- From the point at which they begin formal schooling at around age seven, pupils make increasingly rapid progress and achieve well by the time they leave the school. The strong results achieved in GCSE examinations in recent years are likely to be sustained. Standards in English are high. Standards in mathematics are not as strong, although are in line with the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour is well managed in most instances. Disruption to lessons is rare. Low-level misbehaviour occurs occasionally. This is because some work is not

pitched at the right level for pupils to be able to do it confidently, or is too easy and does not challenge them enough.

- Rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively through the school's 'restorative' approach to discipline. This helps pupils understand the effect their actions have on others. As a result, pupils show empathy and care towards one another. Some parents feel that, on occasion, bullying issues have not been fully resolved in the past. However, pupils say that this is not a problem anymore.
- Staff actively seek to promote pupils' safety, welfare and well-being. Their actions are effective. However, leaders have not ensured that welfare concerns are recorded in as much detail as they should be. This is being rectified, but not as quickly as it needs to be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements begun in the way information about safeguarding is recorded are embedded into the school's practice as quickly as possible
- the work that is under way to improve the quality of teaching makes the anticipated difference to pupils' outcomes in the timescale shown in the school's development plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with: the principal and senior leaders; other school staff; a group of governors, including the co-chairs; and the governor responsible for safeguarding via a telephone conversation. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and as they left the school at the end of the day. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers as they collected their children from school and looked at the 86 responses to the Parent View survey. The responses in 22 staff questionnaires and 22 pupil surveys were taken into account. Inspectors visited lessons, some with senior leaders, and looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. Inspectors considered the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. Inspectors took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates

of progress. A range of documents was scrutinised, including those related to safeguarding and child protection.