

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr John Allen
Principal
King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy
Sheldon Heath Road
Sheldon
Birmingham
West Midlands
B26 2RZ

Dear Mr Allen

Short inspection of King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2017 with Gwendoline Onyon and Peter Kent, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. This visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are highly effective in your work as the principal of the school and you are well supported by a strong leadership team and a committed and well-informed governing body. Your success is reflected in high-quality teaching across the school, which in turn leads to strong and improving examination outcomes. Moreover, the school is increasingly popular with parents.

Further evidence of your drive for improvement is seen through the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. However, you recognise that school development planning can be improved further by focusing even more sharply on the most important priorities. You are also aware that more can be done to accelerate the progress of most-able pupils in comparison to their classmates.

You lead a school which has a strong, caring and ambitious ethos. A focus on individual pupils' needs is at the core of your work. You are ambitious for every pupil's well-being and academic achievement.

Together with other leaders, governors, staff and pupils you have created a highly cohesive, inclusive and harmonious community. Worthy of note is how well staff care for pupils with specific medical issues. They are well trained and work closely

with external agencies to enable pupils to thrive. Staff told inspectors that they had not come across a medical need that could not be addressed at the school.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to focus upon sixth-form outcomes and to improve the quality of teaching so that more of it was good or outstanding. It is evident that you have addressed these issues successfully and this is reflected in pupils' much-improved achievement.

Governors bring a wealth of experience to their role, including in education, law and engineering. They provide both support and challenge to achieve what is best for pupils. Governors have a long-term view and this is seen through the forthcoming move into a multi-academy trust, which they believe will benefit the school in terms of expertise and access to resources. Governors are appreciative of information provided by senior leaders and also gain first-hand knowledge of the school. For example, some governors are linked to departments and others to whole-school areas, including provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors also attend events, such as concerts, to see how pupils benefit from wider aspects of the curriculum.

At the outset of the inspection, I asked what inspectors would see consistently around the school to support your view that it remained good overall. You said that we would see strong relationships, good attitudes to learning from pupils, tolerance and respect. This assertion was correct, as these aspects were evident within all we saw and heard.

Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly. They enjoy learning in a new, spacious and well-designed school. They treat the building with respect and there is neither litter nor graffiti.

You have focused your efforts upon staff recruitment and retention to improve learning and the wider opportunities offered to pupils. Recruitment has been challenging at times and, to attract staff, you have developed strong partnerships with external agencies such as universities. You are proving successful in recruiting the suitably qualified and talented staff who will enable pupils to fulfil their potential. Ongoing, effective, professional development of your staff is pivotal to the school's continued success.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' well-being is your main priority. Systems to ensure that pupils are kept safe are well embedded and robust. There is, however, more to your safeguarding than processes being fully compliant: a strong safeguarding ethos clearly permeates your school. Pupils, parents and staff know whom to approach if they have concerns, and they are confident that matters will be addressed quickly, sensitively and effectively. When appropriate, staff work closely with relevant external agencies.

Inspectors were given evidence to show that safeguarding training takes place for all members of your community, including catering staff, site supervisors, newly

appointed staff and governors. There is a link governor for safeguarding who uses wide experiences in child protection to offer support and challenge.

Inspectors confirmed that all staff and volunteers are subject to relevant employment checks. Inspectors scrutinised a random selection of staff files and found that all were fully in order. All safeguarding documentation is stored safely and securely.

Inspection findings

- Leaders know their school well, including its many strengths and those areas where it could be better still. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate provision and this has led to rising achievement. There is continued reflection on how the school can improve. For example, leaders recognise that development planning, while comprehensive, could be enhanced by focusing upon a smaller number of key priorities and actions. This will enable currently good overall progress to accelerate even further.
- Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils. This is partly due to a welcoming environment in which pupils are keen to learn and socialise. One pupil told inspectors, 'I can be who I want to be here.' Leaders have also improved their tracking and monitoring of pupils' attendance. They have appointed staff whose key focus is improving attendance and who ensure close liaison with parents and external agencies where required. A reward system recognises those pupils who have good attendance. Pupils behave well and levels of exclusion remain well below the national average.
- Leaders are aware that while most-able pupils' progress is good, it does not match that of their classmates. Inspectors saw evidence of pupils' learning being stretched in lessons, including in English and mathematics. However, these opportunities are not consistent across the school. Leaders are aware of the need to identify stronger practice in order to share and celebrate it. In addition to a focus on most-able pupils being given appropriate work in lessons, there is an academic-enrichment programme, including a debating society and opportunities to develop engineering skills.
- In 2016, Year 11 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, made progress that was well above the national average in mathematics, science and the English Baccalaureate. This built upon strong overall performances in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages in 2015. Leaders have, however, identified some variability in subject outcomes and are working well to reduce this. While leaders, including governors, describe this as a work in progress, they could identify data systems, tracking and shared practices which they feel will address these inconsistencies. Inspection evidence confirmed effective work within and across departments.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is good and significantly above average in applied subjects. Inspectors saw good learning being supported in lessons. In discussion with students, inspectors were impressed by how much they enjoy the sixth form and are appreciative of the support and guidance provided by teachers and other staff. Students are given many opportunities to assist them in their

choices of future careers. This includes undertaking work experience and attending careers and higher education fairs. Pupils from Year 9 upwards are encouraged to attend these fairs. Leaders have markedly increased the numbers of pupils moving into sustained education and training, including high-quality apprenticeships, since 2014.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan focuses sharply on the most important priorities and has clearly defined, measurable success criteria
- leaders develop systematic approaches towards improving outcomes for most-able pupils using the good practices already in place at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Nigel Griffiths
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leadership team and other members of staff who have leadership responsibility. We visited several classrooms during the day, where we observed teaching and talked to pupils about their work. We also looked at pupils' work in books and folders. We had informal discussions with pupils and staff throughout the day. I met with three governors and the member of staff with responsibility for looking after pupils with medical needs. Inspectors took account of 88 staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire and six written comments from parents. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour information, and safeguarding policies and procedures.