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Ms Olivia Cole
Principal
The Petchey Academy
Shacklewell Lane
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Dear Ms Cole

Short inspection of The Petchey Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 2018 with Ofsted Inspectors David Boyle and Johanna Davey, 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your team have focused on improving the quality of teaching through appropriate staff professional development opportunities. This has led to pupils achieving standards at or above average in GCSE English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. You have paid particular attention to the most able pupils, and outcomes for this group improved following the last inspection. However, in 2017, the most able pupils' progress in both English and mathematics was not as strong as that found in previous years. You are aware of this and have actions in place to strengthen outcomes for this group of pupils.

You evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development carefully and accurately. You are aware that pupils' outcomes in the 2017 GCSE examinations were below average in history, business studies, art, design and technology and physical education (PE). You were quick to establish the reasons why, and have put in place a plan to ensure that outcomes improve this year. You have introduced greater challenge in lessons, as well as more systematic checking of pupils' understanding.

You and your team have implemented a number of new approaches, including a new behaviour policy to reduce low-level disruption in lessons. This has had a positive impact and pupils are clear about what behaviours are expected of them.

Typically, pupils behave well and are keen to do their best. Nevertheless, on occasion, staff do not apply the new policy consistently. When this is the case, pupils lose focus on their learning. A small number of pupils have been slow to respond to leaders' raised expectations and, consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has increased. Overall, pupils value the changes you have made to promote consistently high standards of behaviour. They behave well in classrooms and around the school site and are keen to do their best. Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they have a concern. Leaders and staff ensure that respect and tolerance are threaded through all aspects of school life. A calm and caring ethos permeates the school, built on values such as politeness, participation and perseverance. These values are understood and appreciated by pupils, and contribute to their positive attitudes to school and each other.

Pupils enjoy school and, until this year, attendance has been at or above average since the previous inspection. There are a small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. This group is having a disproportionately negative effect on the overall attendance figure. You and your team are aware of who these pupils are, and have implemented a plan to improve their attendance.

You communicate regularly with parents, carers and staff through newsletters, reports and briefings. Although a range of communication methods are used, there are some parents who feel that they are not as well informed about their child's education as they would like to be.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have created a culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding practices are reviewed and refined regularly to ensure that effective practice is maintained. Pupils are safe, feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Those in need of additional help and support are well catered for in the school's 'Renaissance Centre'. All staff receive regular safeguarding training, and governors review safeguarding practices and procedures regularly. Governors are proactive in their work, and take safeguarding seriously. They review and update policies in a timely manner. Members of the governing body meet with school leaders regularly to review and strengthen safeguarding and safer recruitment practices.

You have invested in a large and experienced safeguarding team who work well together. Members of the team are aware of pupils' individual needs and the difficulties that they face. For example, pupils in Year 9 have been given the opportunity to take part in a pilot programme tackling the issue of mental health. Communication between staff and outside agencies has been strengthened following the launch of a new electronic referral system in September 2017. Staff know and understand the procedures they should follow if they have a safeguarding concern.

Inspection findings

- For the first key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of your work to improve outcomes for middle-attaining pupils and the most able. We paid particular attention to the impact your work is having on boys, specifically boys who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Although outcomes have generally improved since the last inspection, the progress of middle-attaining pupils and the most able has not been as strong as that of other pupils in the school.
- Leaders are taking effective steps to improve outcomes for middle-attaining pupils and the most able. A comprehensive approach to improving outcomes for middle-ability pupils and the most able is now in place. However, a gap in achievement remains between boys and girls and particularly for the small number of boys who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- At the heart of your approach is the drive to improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. This approach is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Teaching challenges pupils to think hard and aim high. This is particularly the case where teachers model subject-specific language and expect pupils to use this language precisely when talking about their learning.
- Current information indicates that this plan is beginning to work, and is likely to have a positive impact on outcomes in the summer.
- A particular focus on improving outcomes for boys has been introduced. This includes addressing issues with regard to the curriculum, literacy, behaviour, participation and aspiration. Current information reflects an improving picture for most-able boys, and a higher proportion are on track to achieve their target grades in their summer examinations this year.
- Although plans are comprehensive, leaders recognise that the changes made are not yet fully established and it is too soon to judge their impact. For example, there is little evidence to suggest that outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities will improve significantly this year.
- For the second key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at what leaders are doing to improve outcomes in humanities, the performing arts, design and technology and PE. Pupils make less progress in these subjects than they do in subjects such as English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Leaders are committed to developing the quality of teaching to improve outcomes in subjects where progress is not as strong as they would like. Staff are provided with 10 full days of training each year. Leaders have been preparing for changes to the new GCSEs for some time, and a system of peer-to-peer support has been put in place. Moreover, the majority of middle leaders have recently been trained as examiners. There are some early signs of improvement, with pupils making stronger progress in a number of subjects, including history.
- Inspectors noted that, in some lessons, particularly at key stage 3, teachers focus on what pupils are doing, rather than what they are learning. At times, the relevance of what pupils are learning is not always clear. This lack of purpose

sometimes leads to disengagement and some low-level disruption, which hinders pupils' progress.

- The third key line of enquiry focused on outcomes in the sixth form. The progress made by students studying A levels is not as strong as for those studying vocational courses. Outcomes for students studying vocational courses remain strong. Therefore, we looked at what leaders are doing to raise standards across all subjects in the sixth form.
- Leaders, including governors, have prioritised raising standards in the sixth form. In 2017, they took decisive action to modify the sixth-form curriculum offer to ensure that it was appropriate.
- At the same time, leaders are taking effective steps to strengthen teaching in A-level subjects. Staff have benefited from a bespoke programme of professional development to strengthen their teaching skills. In addition, leaders have improved the accuracy of teachers' checks on students' progress by getting external validation of their marking.
- Teachers use assessments effectively to ensure that they plan learning that meets students' needs and targets gaps in their knowledge and understanding. However, sometimes teaching is not challenging enough for the most able students.
- Leaders are addressing this issue. A-level teaching is a key focus of the school's staff professional development programme this year. Mock examination papers have been marked externally to ensure the integrity of internal information used by teachers and leaders.
- Leaders have introduced individual tuition, and every student has a personalised subject intervention plan. This plan is used to facilitate a weekly discussion with each student's tutor, and is having a positive impact on improving students' self-confidence.
- Current information indicates that progress in the sixth form is improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- approaches to improve outcomes are systematically evaluated to ensure that they are effective
- attendance improves for all pupils, particularly those who are persistently absent from school
- communication with parents, pupils, staff and other school partners is clear and effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Niall Gallagher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, your senior leadership team, members of the governing body, including the chair, and a group of middle leaders. We also met with a group of pupils from key stage 4 to talk about their views of the school and we listened to key stage 3 pupils read. We spoke with pupils about their learning on our visits to classrooms, and looked at their books and folders.

We evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies for keeping pupils safe, training, safeguarding checks and record-keeping. We reviewed a range of school documentation, including governors' minutes and internal assessment information. We met with parents and reviewed the responses to the Ofsted surveys for pupils, parents and staff.