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Mr Mark Avoth  
Principal  
The Bourne Academy  
Hadow Road  
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Dorset  
BH10 5HS

Dear Mr Avoth

### **Short inspection of The Bourne Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018 with Tracy Harris, 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and other senior leaders lead the school with integrity and purpose. Consequently, together with the wider staff, leaders have nurtured a school culture that welcomes all pupils, regardless of background. Staff at the school work hard to promote tolerance and respect. Furthermore, leaders and staff take seriously their responsibility to develop qualities such as ambition and resilience in pupils. Staff rightly, and proudly, champion 'ASPIRE', which sets out the school's vision for pupils and threads through different aspects of its work. 'ASPIRE' stands for Ambitious, Self-confident, Physically literate, Independent, Resilient and Emotionally literate.

Your senior team has fostered the development of leadership in others. You encourage staff to take responsibility and exercise initiative. Your personable and positive approach has helped to unite staff behind a common purpose. The overwhelming majority of staff who responded to the survey issued during the inspection feel proud to work at the school. They agree that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. However, senior leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of middle leaders' work. They do not check rigorously enough that middle leaders are fully holding teachers to account for the progress of their pupils.

Governors play an active role in supporting school leaders. They bring a wide range of extensive skills and experience to bear on their work. For example, governors from an accountancy background provide valued financial expertise. Minutes from governors' meetings show that they ask pertinent questions in order to challenge you over the achievement of pupils. Nevertheless, governors do not have a detailed understanding of how additional funding is being used to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils make up nearly half of the total number of pupils on roll. Governors are not clear about which strategies have the most impact on improving achievement and attendance for these pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved in certain areas, although not universally across the curriculum. Effective practice in English has secured strong achievement over time. However, pupils' progress in science has been consistently below average. Where achievement and the quality of teaching are weaker, this is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Pupils are not being sufficiently challenged to grapple with difficult concepts and push themselves on in their learning. In part, this is because some teachers are not ensuring that the work set for pupils and accompanying resources are matched closely to their abilities. It is also because the feedback provided by teachers to help pupils improve their work is not consistently applied in line with the school's policy. Consequently, its impact is variable. This was also identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection.

The school engages well with parents, carers and the local community. You understand the importance of reaching out to secure support for different aspects of the school's work. As a result, and with good reason, the school is held in high regard by parents and local employers. This also explains why the school is oversubscribed. The large majority of parents who responded to the online survey Parent View would recommend the school. As one parent who responded to the survey said, 'The staff here really care.'

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise the achievement of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in key stages 4 and 5. We also considered the extent to which absence and exclusions are reducing, and whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below where they have not already been referred to.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The designated staff who make up the safeguarding team are well trained and understand their responsibilities thoroughly. Staff exercise their responsibilities with confidence because they work well as a team, communicate often and trust each other's judgement. Consequently, they deliver clear messages to the wider staff about child protection. Staff understand the procedures to follow and who to speak to should they have concerns about a child. They know to report any concerns,

however small. This is because staff are told that the information they hold may be key, when placed within a wider context.

Since the beginning of the academic year, referrals have been stored and organised effectively in an online system. This enables staff to track carefully the chronology of events and actions taken for complex cases. Consequently, the safeguarding team is in the best position to offer the support that pupils need. Furthermore, staff are successfully persistent in their attempts to secure support from external agencies to meet pupils' needs.

Pupils are safe in school and reported to inspectors that they feel safe. This is because they do not feel intimidated by other pupils and feel that everywhere in school is a safe place. All pupils who spoke with the lead inspector said they would be happy to speak to members of staff if they had worries. Pupils do not think that bullying is an issue at this school and, if it does occur, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils expressed mixed opinions about behaviour, however. Some pupils said that it was better higher up the school. Moreover, one in five respondents to Parent View disagree that behaviour is good, which is a higher proportion of negative responses than for any other question. Leaders are now taking firmer action to improve behaviour, which is helping to reduce low-level disruption.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2017, the overall progress of pupils at the end of key stage 4 was below average. It was also below average in mathematics and science. Moreover, the progress of middle-ability pupils and those who are disadvantaged was also below average overall and in mathematics and science. Previously, overall progress had been in line with average.
- Progress in English has traditionally been stronger than other subjects. In 2016, it was above the national average for different groups of pupils. In 2017, progress in humanities subjects was above average.
- Where the quality of teaching is improving, teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They ask interesting, probing questions that prompt pupils to offer answers and participate in class discussion. New staff are keen to extend their subject knowledge and improve their practice. They are keen to develop and feel well supported by leaders to do this.
- Students in the sixth form are progressing well. They value the academic and pastoral support they receive from staff and are loyal towards the school. They benefit from positive relationships with staff. Consequently, students' attendance is improving and is better than pupils' attendance in the main school. More students are now also staying on to complete their courses and all students go on to further education, training and employment. Students receive high-quality information, advice and guidance in order to make informed, appropriate decisions about their next steps.
- Staff are rightly proud of the increasing number of students who have achieved places at 'Oxbridge' and Russell Group universities. This is, in part, because of

the helpful partnership with the school's sponsor, Canford School. It is also because of the work staff are doing to raise students' aspirations.

- Attendance has historically been above average. It fell below average last year but is improving again this current academic year. Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils and parents understand the importance of good attendance. They work with other partners, such as the education welfare officer, to employ a full range of strategies to overcome absence. Staff are hampered, to a degree, by local contextual issues and cannot always rely on external support to assist them. As a result, persistent absence is still too high for a minority of pupils.
- Fixed-term and permanent exclusions from school are too high and have been consistently so over time. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy in an effort to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions. However, this is recent and pupils report that it is not consistently applied by all staff.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is improved and achievement raised across the curriculum, particularly in science, as a result of:
  - teachers having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - teachers setting work that meets the needs of pupils of different abilities, including those who are disadvantaged.
- behaviour improves by:
  - reducing fixed-term and permanent exclusions
  - reducing persistent absenteeism
  - staff consistently applying the new behaviour policy.
- leadership improves as a result of:
  - governors having sufficient oversight of pupil premium spending, knowing which strategies make the most impact on raising pupils' achievement
  - senior leaders effectively monitoring the work of middle leaders so that teachers are held to account for the progress made by pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with you, other senior leaders and designated safeguarding leads. We also spoke with representatives of the governing body and pupils.

Inspectors visited lessons, often jointly with staff, to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books, assisted by a member of staff.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Inspectors considered governing body minutes, external reports and information relating to pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 59 responses to the Parent View online survey and 93 responses to the staff survey issued during the inspection.