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Mrs Diane Ahearn  
Principal  
Coppice Academy  
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Dear Mrs Ahearn

### **Short inspection of Coppice Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017 with Jane Edgerton, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2014.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education reported on at the time of the predecessor school's inspection. Since you were appointed in June 2016, you have reshaped the staffing structure and the leadership team and introduced some new systems and procedures which have begun to improve the school further. However, these relatively new initiatives are yet to have maximum impact as they are not yet fully embedded. Additionally, your high expectations of how you want pupils to learn are not yet met consistently.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders, effectively supported by the trust, have built upon strengths and addressed areas for development. Staff are positive about the changes that you have introduced and feel that they have a clear understanding of the school's aims. They value the training that is provided by the school and through the trust. They also believe that performance management is used effectively to help them improve their practice. Staff feel that they are part of a cohesive team.

Positive relationships between all members of the school community help pupils to thrive in this caring, happy school. Pupils and staff work well together to help pupils make good progress. Since the academy was formed, all groups of pupils have made similar good progress from their different starting points in a range of subjects. As a result of this, coupled with high-quality careers advice and guidance

and carefully tailored support for transition, all Year 11 pupils have moved on to sustained education and training.

There is some teaching of a very high quality in the school. Where teaching has the most impact on pupils' progress it is well planned to help pupils deepen their knowledge and develop their skills. Staff give clear instructions, allow pupils to work things out for themselves and use questions to check pupils' understanding and make them think carefully about what they are exploring. However, where teaching is less effective it does not fully engage the pupils and they are unclear on the purpose of their learning. This slows down the progress that they make.

Leaders are aware that the quality of teaching of mathematics is inconsistent and, although English is well taught, the high expectations in that subject area are not replicated elsewhere. Consequently, pupils who present their work well, spell accurately and use grammar and punctuation effectively in English do not do this as a matter of course in other subjects. This hinders rapid progress as it means that skills that are being developed in English are not reinforced elsewhere.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. Absence rates are similar to mainstream schools and the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent is declining. Staff have worked well with families to improve the attendance of pupils who did not attend regularly in the past. Staff have clear systems for following up absence. Good and improved attendance are rewarded and all groups of pupils have similar absence rates.

Pupils' behaviour is managed well in the school. There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy was formed and pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour have been helped to address this. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions and incidents of inappropriate behaviour are declining.

Pupils usually behave well in class and during social time. They play with enthusiasm and consideration at breaktime and lunchtime and the atmosphere in the dining room is calm and orderly. Pupils, staff and parents did not raise any concerns about bullying. Pupils also told inspectors that staff would resolve any squabbles quickly if they arise.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Staff are very well trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities with regard to keeping pupils safe. They have received in-depth training and regular updates, and policies and procedures used in the school are robust. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare and they are clear about their legal duties.

This aspect of the school's work is very well led. Referrals are made promptly and followed up tenaciously. Outside agencies are used appropriately and held to account for their actions by leaders in the school. Record-keeping is thorough and careful checks are made on staff and visitors. The site is secure and pupils are

taught to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, they learn about online safety, road safety, 'stranger danger' and how to stay safe at home. As a result of the strong practice, pupils, staff and parents believe rightly that pupils feel safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are promoted well. Attendance is good and pupils usually behave in an appropriate manner. Pupils are happy in school and enjoy positive relationships with staff and other pupils.
- There are considerable strengths in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, English and the creative curriculum are taught very well. However, inconsistencies remain. Staff do not always make the purpose of learning activities clear and, at times, tasks do not fully engage pupils or inspire them to make rapid progress. High expectations, particularly of writing, that are evident in English lessons are not mirrored in other subjects and the teaching of mathematics is not consistently strong. This means that pupils are not yet making accelerated progress across the curriculum.
- Assessment is accurate as it is checked in the school, within the trust and beyond. Most teachers use the information about what pupils know and can do to plan challenging activities to allow pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Year 11 pupils, including the most able pupils, have achieved well since the academy formed. Pupils in key stage 4 study a range of appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs, BTECs and functional skills. All pupils move onto sustained education or training when they leave the school.
- Younger pupils also make good progress in the school. Different groups of pupils make similar progress to each other in a range of subjects and disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 made particularly strong progress last year. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils and different cohorts. It helps pupils to make good progress, promotes safety and positive behaviour and has been recently adapted to enrich pupils' learning further.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have complementary skills and leadership is developing well at all levels. Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and they are taking effective action to improve the school. However, some of the new systems and structures are not fully embedded so they are yet to have maximum impact on improving the school.
- Shaw Education Trust put the senior leadership team in place and offer high-quality support for and challenge to leaders. Those responsible for governance have appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to hold leaders to close account and directors and trustees have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use the information collected

regularly about the quality of provision to challenge leaders to improve the school further.

- The trust provides a wide range of effective support to the school. This includes regular focused visits, leadership coaching, staff training, specialist support for subject staff and opportunities to enhance the curriculum offer through courses delivered at other schools within the trust. Good-quality human resources, financial, legal, health and safety, buildings and maintenance and information technology services are also provided by the trust.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should use systems and structures that are now in place to ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is of the highest standard and helps pupils make rapid progress throughout the school by:
  - teachers consistently devising activities that engage and inspire pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes
  - staff and pupils having a clear understanding of the purpose of tasks that focus on learning
  - making the high expectations that are evident in the teaching of English a shared priority so that the quality of written work produced in all subjects is of the highest standard
  - eradicating inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held meetings with the principal, other leaders, staff, two governors and two directors of Shaw Education Trust.

We made nine short visits to lessons with senior leaders and looked at pupils' files and books. Inspectors talked to pupils formally and informally and observed behaviour during social time. We also considered 13 responses and four free-text comments on Parent View.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation,

information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and inspectors also looked at published information on the school's website.