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Mr Robert Biglands
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Biglands

Short inspection of Sir John Nelthorpe School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2018 with Her Majesty's Inspector Gina White and Ofsted Inspector David Pridding, 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have honestly evaluated the school and know its strengths and weaknesses. From this analysis, you have produced a well-thought-through school improvement plan in which the priorities to drive improvements are clear and the criteria to judge success are sharply identified. This enables the governing body to challenge and support you, the senior leadership team and middle leaders to ensure that the school develops and pupils continue to receive at least a good standard of education. The plan also enables everyone to know who is doing what and what the expected impact will be. You have high expectations of the staff and pupils. You have a clear, well-articulated vision for Sir John Nelthorpe, which is shared by the governors and the school leadership team. You are not complacent and are fully aware of areas which need development to further improve the standard of education.

The governing body has evaluated its skills and accessed training to ensure that they are up to date. Governors link with key areas of the school and, as a result, know first-hand what is happening. This enables governors to report back at governing body meetings and to be fully aware of the challenges and opportunities the school faces. As a result, the governing body can make more informed decisions.

Around the school, and in the vast majority of lessons, pupils are courteous, polite and respectful of others. Pupils are welcoming to visitors, and structured opportunities within school allow them to help each other and develop leadership skills. For example, sixth formers take responsibility for a group of younger prefects to develop them by passing on their skills. The role of 'lead learner' in all lessons allows pupils to take on responsibility and show their understanding of what is being learned.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and managers place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. They identify the possible risks to pupils at Sir John Nelthorpe and put in place strategies to support pupils to deal with them. For example, additional counselling is helping pupils to deal with the tensions of modern life and to support their mental health. Safer recruitment is consistently practised. Staff training is comprehensive and reviewed regularly, and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and to recognise risks. Consequently, staff are alert to signs of concern and know the procedures to ensure that pupils get the help and support that they need. Pupils are also increasingly confident about self-referring. Pupils are positive that they feel safe and that their concerns will be dealt with. Parents, carers and staff agree. The vast majority of records show a timely response to pupils' concerns. However, in a small number of cases, this practice is not always evidenced.

Inspection findings

- Since January 2018, with the full support of the governing body, a new system for monitoring and evaluating what happens in lessons has been put in place. This system focuses on the progress pupils make and the improvements needed, specific to each teacher and each faculty. The system means that leaders and managers at all levels have a clear understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching are. The system supports teachers to develop their teaching skills and to improve the progress made by pupils and students. Professional development is bespoke to each teacher and is appreciated by teachers as being supportive. Good practice is shared and the developmental areas are followed through via work scrutiny and visits to lessons. Early indications show that this new system is starting to have a positive impact on improving the challenge to pupils in lessons and improving the progress they make. However, you are not complacent about the amount of progress pupils are making. You, quite rightly, have identified that all pupils could make even better progress than the good progress they are already making.
- In 2017, the most able pupils made less progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages than they did in other subjects. The results were quickly reviewed and action taken to ensure that this does not happen again. The actions include providing developmental support for teachers, supporting pupils with bespoke targets and interventions and altering tutor groups to

enable pupils to have more support. Early indications are that these actions have had a positive impact. Your information on progress and the work in pupils' books show that the most able are on track to make better progress, especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages, by the end of Year 11.

- At the time of the last inspection, the most able pupils' progress overall was an area for improvement. Long-term actions to improve pupils' progress were put in place. These included reviewing the mathematics curriculum to make sure that pupils are challenged more across key stages 3 and 4, altering the assessment and tracking procedures in science and sharing good practice from subjects such as history. As a result, the most able pupils are being challenged more in each lesson and are making better progress in all year groups and across the curriculum.
- At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils attended school more regularly. You have strengthened effectively the procedures for monitoring attendance and for following through when pupils do not attend school. You have identified the barriers faced by pupils and developed much better links with parents and families. Action is taken much more swiftly when pupils do not attend. As a result, pupils are attending school more regularly.
- At the time of the last inspection, the sixth form was an area for improvement. A weekly tutorial is now in place to enable the students to cover topics such as study skills, careers and mock interviews. Students appreciate these opportunities. They say the mock interviews, which were held with members of the Rotary Club, were 'thorough and particularly helpful'. In addition, after each assessment point, the tutor meets each student individually to discuss progress and any possible issues. This, combined with the effective advice given to pupils in Year 11, results in the proportion of students who continue on their courses being high. The proportion of students who continue their education or training or go to employment after the sixth form is much higher than the national average. The very small proportion of students who need to resit their mathematics or English GCSEs are given effective support to enable them to improve their grades. Improving the attendance of sixth-form students has been a focus, as in the rest of the school. As a result, students in the sixth form are attending more regularly. Teaching in the sixth form is now monitored as regularly as teaching in the rest of the school. This means that you and the leadership team are fully aware of the quality of teaching and the areas which need development. As a result of this improved monitoring and the strategies put in place to improve teaching across the school, the progress made by sixth-form students is improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all safeguarding records are of the same high quality as the best

- the new policies and procedures for improving teaching are embedded to ensure that all groups of pupils make the best possible progress in all subjects
- the improvements in the sixth form are sustained and students continue to make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection team visited a series of lessons across the full age range of the school and across the curriculum. Sir John Nelthorpe has a joint sixth form with the Vale Academy and sixth formers were visited at the Vale Academy site. Inspectors met with senior leaders and governors. Pupils and students were spoken to both informally at social times and formally in lessons and interviews. A range of documents were considered relating to teaching, safeguarding, pupils' performance and governance. The school's website was also reviewed. Inspectors considered the 104 responses to the pupil questionnaire, the 54 responses to the staff questionnaire, the 61 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the 159 parental responses to the school's own questionnaire.