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15 October 2015

Mr Andrew John  
Sprowston Community High School  
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Dear Mr John

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sprowston Community High School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave us and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, two groups of pupils, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Inspectors and senior leaders visited 14 part-lessons to observe pupils at work.

## Context

Since the last inspection, four newly qualified teachers have joined the mathematics department and one has joined the humanities faculty. A new coordinator of special educational needs has been appointed. A new Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body have recently taken up their posts. Discussions are under way for the school to become an academy, sponsored by the Rightforsuccess Academy Trust, in 2016.

## Main findings

You and your senior leaders have acted promptly to tackle the issues raised at the last inspection and to build upon the improved outcomes that pupils achieved this year. A much higher percentage of Year 11 pupils attained five or more GCSE A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, and the proportions attaining A\* to C grades in a wide range of other subjects were above those found nationally. In the sixth form, results in Years 12 and 13 improved significantly compared to the previous year. These improvements demonstrate that the actions that you are taking to raise achievement are working and are adding momentum to the school's drive to raise overall achievement.

A revised improvement plan prioritises improving the quality of teaching across all key stages and raising the achievement of all pupils, including those known to be disadvantaged, disabled or to have special educational needs. You are using these plans as a 'working document' to monitor the rate of improvement and, at key milestones, to check the impact you and other leaders are having on raising achievement.

You are ensuring that all staff contribute fully to school improvement by holding them more accountable. Half-termly review meetings require subject leaders to evaluate and report upon exactly how well all pupils are progressing, and explain what actions teachers are taking to intervene if pupils show signs of underachieving.

Pupils recognise the improvements being made. Year 9 pupils who met with inspectors said that 'work in lessons is much more challenging now, and our books are marked more often'. All of them feel that they are making better progress this year. Pupils in the sixth form who spoke with inspectors say that improvements have been made to teaching and the monitoring of their progress, and that they notice an increased focus on their attendance this year.

Leaders have higher expectations of teachers. Leaders have introduced new handbooks to support teachers' lesson planning and organisation. Regular learning walks by senior leaders check that elements of effective teaching, agreed by staff, are applied. Schemes of work have been updated. Leaders have revised procedures to manage behaviour in lessons in order to tackle pockets of low-level disruption. Teachers prepare seating plans to indicate which pupils are more able, disadvantaged, disabled or have special educational needs. Teachers use starter

activities to promptly engage pupils in learning at the start of lessons. Some teachers use questioning and personal whiteboards to check that pupils understand what they are doing. Leaders set personal targets, based on pupils' prior attainment, for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of Key Stage 4. These targets are ambitious but the recently introduced grade criteria do not clearly identify pupils' starting points.

Visits to lessons by inspectors and senior leaders confirmed that teachers are not acting on leaders' higher expectations consistently and that the quality of teaching varies across and within subjects. The most-able pupils often do the same work as others, which is too easy and does not challenge them sufficiently. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of all pupils are not high enough, so the quality and quantity of their written work falls short of what you expect of pupils. Some teachers mark pupils' work diligently to provide them with clear advice on how to improve, but some others do not mark work at all. Other than in English lessons, inspectors found few examples of tasks that encourage pupils to write at length in a range of styles to help them improve their writing. Teachers in other subjects are not setting enough suitable writing tasks in lessons or for homework.

Senior leaders' analysis of overall performance data is thorough. Pupils' current progress is assessed every six weeks and reported to parents and carers. Assessment information highlights where pupils are achieving well, and not so well. This provides senior leaders with a clear understanding of which subjects require further support and challenge to improve. You are rightly concerned that not all pupils progress well enough in mathematics. New teachers who have joined the department this year have settled quickly. You are providing support and mentoring to help them become established and begin to raise achievement. The actions leaders have taken to accelerate progress in English are clearly working, but leaders have not extended these strategies fully into mathematics.

Gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with others in the school are closing, and a higher percentage of them attained five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics this year compared to 2014. However, this masks a declining trend in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in mathematics over the past few years, which is compounded by the notable absence from school of some of these pupils. You, your senior leaders and governors acknowledge the need for prompt improvements in mathematics, and that pupils that are disabled or have special educational needs, are disadvantaged or are most able need to be achieving much better than they currently do if the school is to be judged good at its next inspection.

One of your senior leaders now has full responsibility for improving the personal development, welfare and outcomes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. She is systematically tackling the weaknesses which have led to these pupils underperforming in the past. In particular, she is focusing on ensuring that they attend regularly and that teachers provide them with suitable tasks and

support in lessons. This initiative is at an early stage of development and not yet applied consistently.

Newly appointed governors shared with inspectors their good understanding of the issues facing the school. They acknowledge the improvements made this year and the impetus this has added to the school's drive for securing further improvements. They feel that the school is heading in the right direction and that if improvements are continued and sustained there are no barriers preventing it from being judged good at its next inspection.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

You and your governors value the support provided by the local authority, in particular the support and training provided through the Norfolk Good to Great initiative. The additional consultancy support in mathematics brokered by the Norwich Teaching School Alliance is leading to improvements in lessons planning and teaching which are enabling pupils to begin to make improved progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**John Mitcheson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**