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Mrs E Croft  
Headteacher  
South Holderness Technology College  
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Dear Mrs Croft

**Requires improvement: monitoring visit South Holderness Technology College**

Following my visit to your school on 12 January 2016, 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 me 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 visit, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, the joint Chairs of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk with you and your deputy headteacher to observe teaching and examine pupils' work in books and folders. I also met two groups of pupils to discuss their learning and any changes they had identified since the last inspection. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including self-evaluation documents, attendance and assessment information and governing body reports.

## Context

A new headteacher was appointed in January 2016. The acting deputy headteacher has been permanently appointed to the post. Two new joint Chairs of the Governing Body took up their positions in October 2015.

## Main findings

The new headteacher, working in partnership with the deputy headteacher and joint Chairs of the Governing Body, is swiftly establishing a culture of high expectations across the school. Her actions are amplifying the need for greater accountability and giving further momentum to the more focused monitoring activities introduced in September. This is resulting in a more unified and concerted drive for improvement.

Since the last inspection, middle leaders have developed stronger monitoring systems to evaluate the ongoing impact of teaching on pupil progress and outcomes. Their accountability for the performance of their teams has been heightened by a range of measures, including ongoing and unannounced quality assurance visits, regular and more focused meetings with line managers and governing body monitoring visits. Middle leaders are adopting a more rigorous approach to the appraisal of their teams and monitoring has a tighter focus on the performance of key groups, including boys, more-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders and teachers are showing a greater willingness to innovate to improve outcomes. The head of English has explored new approaches to groupings in order to raise expectations at Key Stage 4, which has resulted in improved current progress for Year 11 pupils. A Year 12 learner described how recent teacher training led to the introduction of key reminders that had improved the quality of her psychology essays. The school has begun to address the need to embed the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school with the appointment of coordinators to these roles and the use of tutorial time for literacy and numeracy activities. It is essential that these actions have a rapid and sustained impact on pupils' achievements.

New behaviour systems are well understood by pupils and staff and are promoting better engagement and significantly reducing low-level disruption. Key Stage 3 pupils said the atmosphere in lessons this term is 'stricter'. Middle leaders commented upon a tangible improvement in school ethos, with a much stronger focus on learning. Lesson observations reflected these improvements, as pupils were consistently focused and well behaved. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved. The overall attendance remains broadly in line with national figures.

The most recent progress of pupils presents a variable picture. Increased progress is reflected in the much-improved performance at AS and A level in summer 2015. Retention rates have also increased from the disappointing 56% in 2013–14 to 70% last year, reflecting improved support and better planning. Outcomes at Key Stage 4 were not as successful, largely due to a significant fall in English results, a subject

that was a previous strength of the school. Attainment and progress in mathematics were broadly in line with national figures, although performance of the more able remains a key area for improvement in this subject. Current assessment information for Year 11 indicates that pupils are on track to achieve stronger outcomes in 2016. It is essential that progress tracking, learning support and teaching quality over time realise these projections to secure improved outcomes for different groups of pupils across the curriculum. External partnerships are leading to new ways of working, including work with Healing School – A Science Academy and the Humber Teaching School.

Leaders have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching than at the time of the last inspection through increased monitoring and a focus on typicality of teaching over time. Some highly effective practice was observed, along with less successful provision, confirming that the unevenness remains and that the drive for teaching to be consistently good continues to be a key priority.

The school has tolerated underperformance for too long and school leaders and governors are keen to ensure that improvement is both rapid and sustained. It is crucial that senior leaders and governors refine the school's action plan so that evaluations of leadership and teaching are closely linked to pupil outcomes. In addition, the underperformance of pupils in a number of subjects is not challenged robustly enough, though there is an emerging culture of increased accountability. More purposeful engagement with parents and stakeholders is not being pursued rigorously enough in order to generate a shared culture of high expectation.

### **External support**

The school has continued to work closely with a local outstanding school, Healing School – A Science Academy, to strengthen senior and subject leadership and the impact of monitoring at all levels. Further partnership work with the Humber Teaching School has helped to sharpen the school's improvement priorities and boost expertise by providing access to a number of high-performing schools. The local authority has actively supported partnership work and the early signs are that this initiative is helping to develop school leaders' skills. However, the local authority's actions over a considerable period have not enabled the school to improve to good.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**