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Mr Peter Devonish  
Headteacher  
Dereham Neatherd High School  
Norwich Road  
East Dereham  
NR20 3AX

Dear Mr Devonish

### **Short inspection of Dereham Neatherd High School**

Following my visit to your school with Anthony Sharpe HMI on 29 September 2015, 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 May 2012.

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

You and other senior leaders are sustaining a culture of high ambition for all students, whatever their individual circumstances or starting points, and maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is a calm, attractive and welcoming environment. The site is well cared for, and free from litter and graffiti.

Leaders are maintaining students' positive attitude towards learning by ensuring that the curriculum matches their needs and that teaching is usually lively and engaging. This, together with your focus on developing students' study skills, is helping most groups of students to make good or better progress, particularly at GCSE level. In 2015, the proportion of students who made good or better progress in many GCSE subjects was high, as was the proportion gaining at least five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics.

You celebrate difference and diversity within the student body, which helps to sustain a community characterised by tolerance and mutual respect. Students report that examples of bullying, including racial or homophobic bullying are rare and are usually dealt with quickly and effectively when they do occur; this view is supported by the school's monitoring information.

Very many students participate in an exceptionally wide range of clubs, societies and posts of responsibility, such as serving as prefects or sports leaders. This supports their personal development and contributes well to the vibrancy of school life. Senior leaders communicate high expectations for conduct in lessons and around the

school. Teachers reinforce these. As a result, behaviour is good. Students socialise well together and enjoy positive and productive relationships with their teachers.

At the previous inspection, inspectors commended you and your team for strong leadership and success in tackling areas of weakness. Inspectors also identified that some teaching required improvement to ensure that all students made the best possible progress, including those finding the work difficult. Inspectors asked leaders to ensure that their observations of teaching maintained a focus upon students' learning and progress. You and your leadership team have been resolute and relentless in your determination to tackle these and other areas of the school's work. This has brought about improvements:

- Very many of the less-able students are making much better progress over time. In 2014, for example, this group made better than expected progress overall at GCSE. This is, in large part, because the quality of teaching has improved.
- Leaders keep a sharp focus on the learning and progress of different groups of students when observing teaching. They take the extent of students' progress over time in to account when assessing teachers' performance and making decisions about pay progression. Leaders' analysis indicates that most groups made good or better progress overall in 2015 at GCSE level.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Students report that they feel safe in all areas of the school site. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that the school keeps students safe and secure. Regular and frequent training ensures that staff understand how to spot and report any concerns. The school's records indicate that any issues are followed up promptly, appropriately and effectively. Assemblies and the computing curriculum provide students with a good understanding of how to stay safe online. Leaders ensure that any unexplained or long-term student absence is investigated or monitored carefully.

### **Inspection findings**

- Rigorous and robust self-evaluation helps leaders, including subject leaders and governors, understand what the school does well and what needs to improve further. Governors use the information about students' progress to challenge leaders to improve outcomes.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of subject leaders. They provide them with suitable challenge and support through training, mentoring, regular meetings and 'reviews'. Leaders have acted quickly to secure improvement in key subjects, including science and English.

- At Key Stage 4, regular checks confirm the accuracy of the marks or grades that teachers apply to students' work and students understand how much progress they have made. Most teachers give students precise feedback on their work. The majority respond and make the necessary improvements. This has helped to increase the proportion who are making good or better progress in many subjects, particularly English.
- Leaders ensure that all teachers benefit from well-targeted training and support. The school's monitoring information indicates this helps most to improve particular aspects of their teaching. Inspectors noted examples of this during visits to lessons.
- Leaders encourage teachers to ensure that lesson tasks are demanding. During the inspection, inspectors observed much expert use of questioning by teachers. This and other techniques helped students to think deeply and explain their thinking. Key Stage 4 students, including some of the more-able, told inspectors that they usually complete challenging work.
- The assessment of students' progress at Key Stage 4 is secure; leaders are making good use of their monitoring information to quickly identify individuals and groups of students who are at risk of falling behind and provide help so that they catch up. This has had a particular impact on the progress made by disadvantaged students.
- Leaders acknowledge that the quality of assessment and feedback at Key Stage 3 is variable. Sometimes students are unsure about what they need to do to improve because the feedback they receive is imprecise. The assessments students complete sometimes do not give teachers clear or regular enough information about what students can and cannot do well. This means teachers do not always provide students with appropriate support or challenge.
- You and your leadership team have begun to monitor students' attitudes to learning carefully. This is ensuring leaders receive information about individuals or groups who are not working hard enough. Over time, the proportion of students whose attitudes to learning are good or better is high and rising because leaders and teachers challenge poor attitudes.
- Leaders have halted the dip in student outcomes in the sixth form that accompanied a period of very rapid expansion. During that time some students struggled with subjects that were not a good match for their needs and abilities. Transition arrangements are now more rigorous in ensuring students choose the right courses. Leaders have found effective ways of holding staff to account for standards in a jointly-run sixth form. However, you and your team recognise that sometimes the feedback provided to students is not timely or precise enough. Some students are making limited progress because a minority of teachers do not ensure that students move on

to new or more challenging work as soon as they are ready to, or that tasks are sufficiently engaging.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- at Key Stage 3, assessment tasks are designed to provide teachers with the necessary information to give feedback that enables all groups of students to develop, deepen and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills
- all teachers in the sixth form ensure that students move on to new or more challenging work as soon as is appropriate, and that precise feedback enables them to make the necessary improvements.

Yours sincerely  
Jason Howard

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

#### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection we met you, your senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. We visited a number of subject areas with your senior leaders to observe teaching and look at students' work. We met several groups of students. Inspectors evaluated recent information about students' progress. We reviewed records about keeping students safe and about attendance and punctuality and examined a wide range of other documentary evidence, including that relating to the school's ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation. We considered the views of parents from Parent View and analysed the views from 59 staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire.