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3 May 2016

Mr Jack Jackson
Executive Principal
Launceston College
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Dear Mr Jackson

Short inspection of Launceston College

Following my visit to the school on 12 April 2016 with Steve Smith HMI and Justine Hocking OI, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your staff are rightly proud of the strengths of the school and particularly the improvements in pupils' overall attainment. The school encourages its pupils to have high aspirations and, as a result, they make good progress across a range of subjects. The school also provides a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities for its pupils. To take just one example among many, Year 7 pupils spoke enthusiastically about the links you have with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Overall, the school has created a stimulating environment in which pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Most pupils and the vast majority of parents would recommend the school; as one parent stated in Ofsted's online questionnaire, the school 'really gives confidence to my children to "go for it" and believe in themselves'. Staff morale is very high and virtually all are proud to work at the school; as one member of staff said, 'it is a lovely school to work at'.

Launceston College is beginning a new phase in its life as part of a multi-academy trust with Bideford College. This has led to a restructuring of the local governing body and the creation of an overarching multi-academy trust board. You, governors and multi-academy board members are enthusiastic about the opportunities

presented by this new situation and you are all determined to make it succeed to the benefit of both schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and governors have successfully established a culture of vigilance in the school when it comes to safeguarding and child protection. The recently appointed designated safeguarding lead is growing into his role well and is ably supported by a senior leader. The chair of the local governing body, who also acts as the safeguarding governor, brings important expertise from his professional life. He has been involved in fostering a culture in which it is safe for pupils to speak out; pupils know whom to turn to in times of trouble. The vast majority of pupils, parents and staff are confident that pupils are safe at the school and can thrive as a result.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. The single central record of checks on the backgrounds of teachers and other staff meets requirements. Child protection records are extremely well managed; they are methodical, with clear summaries matching key issues to actions taken.

Inspection findings

- Leaders at all levels have continued to secure good examination results for the pupils at Launceston College. In 2015, the school secured its best-ever GCSE results in terms of the proportion of pupils in Year 11 who attained five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. You are sustaining and improving these results with current pupils. In the sixth form, learners' attainment is also strong, particularly among the most able at A level, a higher proportion of whom gain top grades than similar learners nationally.
- Leaders and governors have a clear awareness of the school's many strengths and can describe them in detail. In some respects, however, leaders' evaluation of performance is generous. Furthermore, discussions with leaders at all levels identified that there was little shared understanding of the key strategic development priorities for Launceston College.
- Measured from their starting points, the progress of pupils overall has historically been in line with national averages. It has varied somewhat from subject to subject, however, and between different groups of pupils. In English and science, pupils continue to make more rapid progress than their peers nationally, but progress is not as strong in mathematics. Moreover, the school's own information shows that this is particularly the case in mathematics for pupils eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding provided to schools for pupils from a disadvantaged background).
- Inspectors' observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed that these variations continue to some extent. In English, the level of challenge is high and pupils make good progress as a consequence of this

and also because of the effective feedback they receive in line with the department's policy. In mathematics, however, the level of challenge is often not appropriate to the starting points of pupils and progress slows as a result. Feedback to pupils in mathematics is also less effective than in English. In the sample of books scrutinised, there was little evidence of teachers following the departmental policy on the use of feedback to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

- Disadvantaged pupils are now making more rapid progress than in the past, although there is more work to be done in terms of adapting teaching to meet the specific needs of this group of pupils. In addition, in some of their analyses of the progress of disadvantaged pupils, school leaders have a tendency to compare their rates of progress with disadvantaged pupils nationally. This can obscure the gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The sixth form continues to provide good-quality education, and learners follow study programmes that meet their needs and which include suitable non-qualification activity, such as work experience. Comprehensive tracking information gathered by the school demonstrates that current learners are making good progress in line with previous cohorts. Learners speak very positively about their life in the sixth form and feel the balance between lessons and private study time helps them to become independent and self-sufficient. Although a relatively small proportion of the cohort, disadvantaged learners in the sixth form make slower progress than others. Those learners who enter the sixth form without a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics are following appropriate courses to allow them to retake these qualifications; many achieve a C grade or above.
- Provision and outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs or disability are both good, especially for those based wholly or partly in the Castle Area Resource Base. This is a specialist unit run by the school for pupils with a range of severe learning difficulties across Years 7 to 11. A number of parents took the opportunity in their responses to the parental questionnaire to praise the work done in this unit and to describe how it had helped their children. Some did suggest, however, that communication within the school and between the school and home could be improved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's evaluation of its own performance and its strategic planning are underpinned by a clear, shared and articulated understanding not only of its strengths but also of the areas which the school needs to work on in order to improve further
- they focus more effectively on the needs of disadvantaged pupils, including those in the sixth form, so that their progress and attainment match those of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally

- pupils' attainment and achievement in mathematics improve so that they more closely resemble those in subjects such as English and science.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors undertook observations in lessons and also took the opportunity to scrutinise pupils' work. All observations in lessons were undertaken jointly either with you or with another senior leader. Inspectors held discussions with you and other members of staff; I spoke to the chair of the multi-academy trust by telephone; and discussions also took place with three members of the local governing body. Inspectors held meetings with selected groups of pupils. They also examined some of the school's documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection. In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 137 responses to the parental survey (plus two responses submitted by hand), 229 responses to the survey of pupils and 83 responses to the staff survey.