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Kathy Hardy
Principal
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Dear Mrs Hardy

Short inspection of East Leake Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2016 with Ellenor Beighton, Ofsted Inspector, 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 October 2012.

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 established a clear and unambiguous vision for the school since you became principal 11 months ago. The vast majority of staff and pupils agree that standards and expectations have improved significantly. Senior leaders communicate consistent messages; they provide effective support and challenge for middle leaders and other teachers. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving, pupils' progress is accelerating, and the behaviour of pupils is mostly cooperative and respectful.

Leaders have demonstrated a track record of improvements. Previous weaknesses in English and science have been quickly addressed, which has led to significant improvements in pupils' achievement in 2015. The quality of teaching in these subjects is now largely consistently good or better. Disappointing results in mathematics in 2015 led to considerable changes in this subject area. You have allocated line management responsibilities for this subject astutely. Almost the entire department team is new from September 2015, including the head of subject. The quality of teaching is improving rapidly and pupils' progress is accelerating quickly. There is a notable consistency in practice, in particular the high quality of feedback given to pupils to help them make progress. Previous wide gaps in mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are closing quickly. The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are improving steadily

across the school. However, very few of these pupils choose to stay on in the sixth form to pursue academic or work-related courses. You recognise that improving retention in the sixth form and raising aspirations for this group should be a school priority.

You have also taken swift action to improve attendance to the school. Procedures to monitor, track and support those pupils with poorer attendance have been stepped up. You have clearly defined the attendance officer's role and responsibilities. As a result, attendance is now comparable to national figures and those individuals who are persistently absent are being supported and monitored closely to improve their attendance. Unfortunately, leaders do not apply the same rigour in checking sixth form attendance. As a result of this inspection, you have immediately put in place a new set of procedures to ensure that learners' attendance to the sixth form is closely monitored and notification of unplanned absences is made in a timely manner.

You recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that all teachers have the same high expectations. For example, some teachers do not insist that pupils complete work to the best of their ability. In addition, your efforts to improve parental engagement have not been effective for a small proportion of parents. From the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, it is evident that while the majority of parents are supportive of the leadership team, some parents believe that the school could improve communication and address parental concerns more swiftly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements and child protection policies are overseen by a governor, who is experienced and knowledgeable. Policies are compliant and well understood by staff. The designated safeguarding lead is diligent and meticulous. He ensures that referrals are acted on in a timely manner; the school has developed excellent relationships with external agencies and the local authority. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe in the school and they feel comfortable telling an adult about any concerns they may have. Although there are few bullying incidents recorded, a small number of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire say that they have been affected by this type of behaviour. Leaders are aware of this and are reinforcing the school's zero tolerance of bullying and unkind behaviour through tutorials and assemblies. Teachers and pupils are aware of the risks of child sexual exploitation, internet and social media use, as well as the threats posed by extremist ideology. These issues are raised in training for staff, and in assemblies and 'Lifeskills' lessons for pupils.

Inspection findings

- You have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school in your self-evaluation. You have carried out a thorough analysis of reasons why the 2015 examination results were disappointing in certain subject areas. The school improvement plan provides a clear set of actions with associated success criteria by which governors and other stakeholders can

measure progress. Early evaluations of the plan suggest that actions taken so far are making a difference.

- Governors have a sound grasp of the key priorities for the school. They hold leaders to account effectively through their committee structure. They also use the detailed and valuable reviews provided by the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership (DALP) to help verify what school leaders are telling them. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body gain the views of learners in the sixth form to gauge the impact of the work of leaders.
- Core subject leaders are becoming more effective. They recognise and appreciate the new culture of increased accountability introduced by you. They carry out their monitoring duties regularly. They use a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching in their area, including the evaluation of pupils' work in books and pupils' views about their learning. Consequently, they have an accurate view of areas for improvement and strength.
- The vast majority of the staff are highly supportive of the leadership team. They also value the training and development opportunities in the school. Subject leaders have received valuable support from subject specialists from the DALP network, which has helped to validate teachers' assessments of pupils.
- Key stage 4 pupils and sixth formers told inspectors they are very appreciative of the support provided to them by teachers. They enjoy their lessons, including after-school activities. They also recognise the improvements to the school since you became the principal.
- Behaviour is improving in the school. A small number of pupils who deliberately flouted the re-established standards and behaviour expectations at the start of the academic year caused a spike in exclusions. This term, exclusions have dramatically reduced, indicating the effectiveness of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils' behaviour in class is mostly characterised by positive attitudes and respectful relationships.
- Learners make good progress in the sixth form. They benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership and work skills. They support younger pupils in the main school during tutor sessions. The number of pupils electing to stay on in the school sixth form is increasing, although only a very small number from disadvantaged backgrounds choose to pursue their post-16 studies at the school. You recognise this issue, as well as the need to retain more learners from Year 12 to Year 13. All learners who leave the school proceed into employment, education or training.
- The leadership of the special educational needs department has been strengthened. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and disability is improving. They are supported well through effective guidance from teaching assistants and intervention classes.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving compared to last year. The gap between their progress and attainment and that of others in the school and nationally is closing; the gap is smaller in mathematics compared to that in English. School leaders monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils robustly and carefully evaluate the support they are given.

- School leaders are developing the pastoral curriculum. 'Lifeskills' lessons, in mixed age groups, and assemblies, provide pupils and learners in the sixth form with a programme of work based on key local, national and international issues as well as personal and health-related matters. Pupils engage well with discussions during 'Lifeskills' sessions; teachers emphasise respect for one another's views. However, tutors do not always check written work in these sessions. Consequently, workbooks are sometimes poorly presented and littered with uncorrected grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- procedures to monitor attendance in the sixth form are as effective as they are in the main school
- a leadership strategy is implemented swiftly to improve pupil retention between Year 11 and 12 and between Year 12 and 13, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- all teachers have equally high expectations of what pupils can and should be able to do
- strategies to improve parental engagement are more effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team, representatives from the governing body, the sixth form leader, and curriculum team leaders for key subjects. The team inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and other senior leaders. Together we visited a range of lessons across the main school and the sixth form. Some observations of teaching were jointly undertaken with senior leaders. We also observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break and lunchtimes, and during lessons. An inspector spoke with two groups of pupils. Inspectors considered the views of 134 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 117 free-text responses. We also took account of the views of 101 pupils and 51 staff, as well as the school's own collection of parental letters and testimonials. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised. In addition, we considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, pupil performance information, and safeguarding records and policies.