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Mark Farrar  
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Dear Mr Farrar

### **Short inspection of Reepham High School and College**

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2016 with Kim Pigram, Her Majesty's 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 the school was judged to be good in May 2013.

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

Your leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have been unwavering in your determination that each pupil should have the opportunity to achieve their best in a highly academic environment. In this you have been successful. As a result, since the last inspection, outcomes have risen sharply for many pupils. The sixth form, which was judged to be outstanding at the previous inspection, remains so.

There is a distinctive ethos of respect that permeates almost all areas of the school. It is a harmonious place to learn. This is because you have established an atmosphere in which excellent relationships are the norm; something that the large majority of pupils and staff appreciate and contribute to willingly.

Pupils move around the very well-maintained school site purposefully and with polite good humour. Many confidently and cheerfully greeted inspectors and explained how much they valued the work of their teachers. One pupil explained that 'teachers respect us and make learning fun'. This was a sentiment echoed by many of her peers who told inspectors they enjoyed school. Pupils appreciate the range of additional activities provided. These activities include trips abroad, sports clubs, trips to university and creative arts clubs.

The sixth form continues to lead the way for other areas of the school in many aspects of its work. The highly effective sixth-form leader has high aspirations of what students can achieve. These aspirations are shared by teachers in the sixth

form. Sixth-form students respond exceptionally well to the expectation that they should take responsibility for their own learning. They are adept at managing their time and organising their work. Students are proud of their sixth form. They told inspectors that they feel supported, well taught and very well cared for. Inspection evidence confirmed this to be the case. Teaching, much of which takes place in the well-resourced sixth-form building, is characterised by detailed subject knowledge, skilfully planned learning, highly effective feedback and exceptionally strong relationships. As a result outcomes remain high and are improving further. Students make exceptional progress from their individual starting points. Leaders in the sixth form ensure that students are very effectively prepared for the next stage of their education. For example, each student gains experience of the world of work, often in carefully chosen settings that relate directly to their interests and future ambitions. A large proportion continue into further education, employment or training.

Strong leadership and effective teaching have ensured that outcomes in key stages 3 and 4 have risen since the last inspection. Pupils enter the school with prior attainment in line with national averages. In 2015 very many pupils made significantly better progress than other pupils nationally. Achievement in mathematics, humanities, modern foreign languages and science was impressive. Evidence seen in lessons, books and your accurate assessment information indicates that many pupils continue to achieve very well.

You are aware from your careful monitoring that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in 2015 remained less than that made by other pupils in your school and nationally. While disadvantaged pupils are catching up, it has not been at the pace you wish them to. You have rightly made this a priority area for the school. Similarly, pupils who have special educational needs or disability did not make the progress of which they were capable in 2015. You have taken swift action to address this and evidence seen on inspection indicates that this is already having an impact on the progress that these pupils are making. However, you know that more work needs to be done to meet the needs of these pupils and have appropriate plans in place to address this.

Almost all pupils behave very well. They arrive at lessons keen to learn and respond enthusiastically to learning activities that are closely matched to their needs. They are generally supportive of each other in lessons and this makes for a positive environment in which they can learn. For example, pupils in a Year 9 mathematics lesson worked energetically on an imaginatively planned activity that enabled them to develop their skills in solving complex equations. Inspection evidence indicates that a small number of pupils do not display the high levels of maturity and self-discipline that you, your staff and pupils expect. This is the case where some teachers do not plan learning that sufficiently meets the needs of pupils in lower-ability sets.

You and your governors recognise that it is important to retain and develop effective teachers and leaders. This is something that you are doing well. Teachers and middle leaders informed inspectors that they are valued and able to make significant contributions to school improvement. They explained that they can access training that is relevant to their individual needs. Best practice is shared

through the school's regular 'learning agenda' sessions. Leaders and teachers are held to account through effective management of their performance. This is based around the expectation that they will make a substantial and sustained contribution to school life. As a consequence teaching continues to improve and staff are highly supportive of the vision and direction provided by senior leaders and governors of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils at Reepham High School and College feel safe, are safe and know how to act in a safe manner. They explained how the school provides them with information and strategies to stay safe in a variety of settings, including when online. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for and about. Pupils know what bullying is and explain that this is an unusual occurrence at school and if it were to occur they are confident that it would be swiftly dealt with. Staff are appropriately trained and have a clear understanding of what to do if they have concerns about the safety of any pupil in their care. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding practice is compliant. However, more could be done to ensure that policies are up to date and records are easily accessible at a time when school systems are being upgraded.

### **Inspection findings**

- Under your calm, clear direction leaders display an eagerness to improve all areas of the school. Your clear focus on the correct priorities since the last inspection has resulted in improvements across many areas of the school. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school and are prepared to challenge practice that does not meet your high expectations. Leaders, including subject leaders, monitor teaching accurately and regularly, taking into account a range of evidence. You use the information gathered from this monitoring to inform your self-evaluation and your training activities. However, your school's improvement plan lacks the precise milestones against which progress towards the ambitious targets can be measured.
- The governing body is well informed about the progress that pupils make. Governors have the expertise and knowledge to hold you to account when they feel that things could be improved and they do so on a regular basis. They share your high aspirations for the school and are fully prepared to support you to ensure that you achieve these ambitions, for example, in appointing additional members of staff to the English and mathematics departments.
- Middle leadership is highly effective. The knowledgeable subject leaders share your enthusiasm and are having a considerable impact on the quality of education that the school provides. For example, leaders in mathematics and humanities, supported by you, have taken appropriate action to increase the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment. As a result, outcomes in these subjects have improved sharply.
- You have skilfully created an ethos in which staff are valued and have the opportunities to improve their practice as teachers and leaders. In doing so

you have developed a staff team that is highly motivated and prepared to innovate. Complacency is not accepted here. Teachers are appreciative of the training that they receive and can point to examples where this has had a considerable impact on the quality of their teaching. For example, the impact of recent training on questioning was clearly in evidence in the strong practice seen in geography and catering lessons.

- Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the education they receive at Reepham High School and College. They explained that their teachers know them well and care about them. Pupils have faith that, were there to be a problem, they could approach adults in the school and that they would work effectively to resolve the issue. Pupils also explained that they learn a lot in their lessons, especially in English, mathematics, science and geography. The evidence seen on inspection confirms that this is the case.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan learning that interests and challenges many pupils. For example, aided by the skilful prompting by the teacher, pupils in a Year 10 geography lesson were able to challenge their initial thinking and deepen their understanding of levels of deprivation across the world.
- You acknowledge that inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment remain. Your agreed approach to providing feedback for pupils is not consistently applied. Where it is, for example in the sixth form, it has a significant impact on the progress that learners make. However, in some subject areas, teachers' feedback lacks the precision needed to enable pupils to quickly improve their work. Similarly teachers' expectations of how pupils', especially boys', work should be presented varies and in some lessons untidy, careless work goes unchallenged. Again, you are aware of this and are already taking action to address it.
- Under the new leadership of special educational needs, provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is developing quickly. Teachers are provided with information about the individual needs of each pupil along with general approaches to enable them to plan learning effectively. However, more needs to be done to equip teachers with the precise strategies which will help these pupils make the same high levels of progress as their peers.
- The last inspection report asked that you work to improve pupils' attendance. You have taken effective action to do so for many pupils. As a result of this, absence has reduced and overall attendance is in line with national averages. The attendance of pupils who have special education needs or disability has improved. This is not the case for disadvantaged pupils, whose attendance remains below that of others.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further actions are taken to identify the reasons why disadvantaged pupils' attendance and achievement are lower than that of their peers, and use this information to develop more effective strategies to bring about rapid improvement

- teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills that enable them to plan learning to meet the individual needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, six middle leaders, six governors and two groups of pupils and sixth-form students. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed pupils at work in a range of lessons and looked at work in books and folders. Several of these visits were carried out jointly with school leaders. Inspectors visited an assembly and spoke with pupils at break and lunchtime. The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to governance, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and school self-evaluation and planning. Inspectors considered 129 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. We also took account of the views expressed in the parents' free text responses received on the day of inspection.