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Mr Jonathan Stocker
Principal
Nine Maidens Alternative Provision Academy
Nine Maidens
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Dear Mr Stocker

Short inspection of Nine Maidens Alternative Provision Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 July 2016 with Sarah Gillett HMI, 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.

You, the governors and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education that the school provides since the school converted to academy status. You have ensured that the school is a calm, settled environment where pupils feel safe and secure. You have built a close and supportive staff team who share your commitment and vision. The successful development of pupils' social and emotional skills is a particularly strong feature of the school's work.

You continue to look for new ways to improve the school. With the support of governors and other school leaders, you have used additional funding well to help pupils to catch up and improve their reading skills. The school's innovative approach is providing high-quality support and additional resources that promote pupils' development of reading well and enhance their self-esteem.

The range and depth of activities that you provide at the school, effective planning by staff and pupils' positive attitudes to learning all ensure that the majority of pupils achieve good outcomes across a range of subjects. Staff use assessment and planning well to meet the needs of most pupils. However, further fine-tuning is required to ensure that activities regularly provide greater challenge for some pupils, particularly the most able, who occasionally find work too easy. Marking has improved so that pupils are often provided with praise and encouragement that recognise their achievements.

Senior and middle leaders at the school provide support and guidance to other

schools in the academy. The leaders of mathematics and the leader of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have worked in partnership with local schools to share practice and sharpen the quality of assessment, planning and provision.

You, senior leaders, the academy board and local governing body provide direction and a good level of challenge that have maintained high standards of behaviour and promoted good achievement. Senior, middle leaders and an external advisor regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. All have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your monitoring of the quality of teaching is used appropriately to check that the school's latest improvement actions have been implemented consistently and to provide coaching and support for staff. Monitoring of pupils' behaviour and their developing social skills is used to set clear targets that help pupils to regulate and manage their behaviour. However, monitoring does not yet place enough emphasis on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff pay careful attention to maintaining pupils' safety and well-being. Staff and governor training ensures that all have the appropriate level of knowledge and skills. Regular audits of the school's safeguarding arrangements are undertaken by senior leaders and governors. The school's checks on the recruitment and suitability of staff to work with children and young people are thorough, as is record keeping. Staff apply the school's safeguarding procedures and concerns are shared appropriately with other agencies and monitored by senior leaders.

Records relating to exclusions and incidents of challenging behaviour are logged appropriately, and governors receive regular reports on the nature and frequency of these incidents. Leaders monitor these to ensure that pupils receive additional support where necessary. Senior leaders have recently developed an innovative use of information technology that allows a more rigorous analysis of trends in attendance and referrals to other agencies. These systems are not yet used to ensure that leaders update staff training or adapt the school's personal, social and health education in response to identified trends and to raise the awareness of staff and pupils where necessary.

Inspection findings

- Senior and middle leaders provide levels of support and coaching that are helping to develop the quality of teaching, including for recently appointed staff. Their monitoring has helped to embed a consistent approach in many areas, for example in managing pupils' behaviour. However, monitoring does not provide staff with clear evaluations of the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly that of the most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This lessens the effectiveness of feedback that teachers receive and does not provide staff with information on how to further

increase the rates of progress of key groups of pupils.

- Partner schools describe improvements in the information that is shared between schools. Records of pupils' attendance and behaviour are now shared daily with partner schools. This approach provides a common understanding of pupils' social and emotional development and contributes towards the school's successful reintegration of pupils into mainstream schools. A recently appointed family support worker has improved liaison with parents and is helping improve communication and reduce parental anxiety during transition between schools.
- Teaching is characterised by the good levels of care and attention that are shown to pupils. In line with amendments to the school's approach, teachers' marking has improved so that pupils are regularly provided with praise and encouragement for their efforts. However, pupils do not regularly receive guidance through marking on how to improve a piece of work and rarely respond by reviewing mistakes they have made, for example. Although teachers regularly set a range of different activities, they do not use assessment information effectively in some classes to adapt work to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able pupils. As a result, some pupils make slower progress than they should because they find the work too hard or too easy.
- A broad curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to develop their knowledge and personal and social skills across a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils spoke confidently about the Roman invasion of Britain and had fashioned replica armour and shields. School trips and visits are regular features that enhance the curriculum. Primary sports funding is used well to provide younger pupils with access to different sports. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to participate in competitions and sporting activities; these are new experiences for many pupils.
- Staff make good use of a range of strategies to promote pupils' literacy and communication skills. Pupils are regularly encouraged to read aloud to staff and other pupils. In one instance, pupils finished a mathematical activity and then settled down on a comfortable sofa, reading aloud to adults with obvious enjoyment. Younger pupils displayed good communication skills, confidently explaining how to identify equivalent fractions.
- Behaviour management systems are applied consistently across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and play a big part in developing a calm and welcoming school environment. Pupils understand the boundaries and are encouraged to develop positive attitudes to learning. As a result of the clear rules and procedures and a caring approach, pupils show good levels of respect for the staff and school resources. Lively displays featuring pupils' work are a source of pride and help to generate a purposeful learning environment.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in developing social, emotional and personal skills. Their progress is tracked and information used purposefully to adapt support plans and encourage pupils to regulate and modify their behaviour. Pupils' attendance at the school is higher than in all of the other settings in the trust. The school is successful in reintegrating pupils into

mainstream schools to continue their education.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Monitoring of these pupils' progress is used well to set targets that are regularly adapted. As a result, the pupils feel a sense of achievement and strive to reach the next academic goal and stage in their personal development. Teaching assistants are especially adept at moving in and out of activities to encourage them to solve problems for themselves and to refocus pupils on the task in hand.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress similar to that of their peers. The school reviews pupils' progress and adapts provision to help those in danger of falling behind. A recently introduced reading intervention programme uses pupil premium funding effectively to provide small-group and individual reading sessions. Well-trained teaching assistants build pupils' confidence and are helping them to catch up.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- senior staff and governors improve their analysis of incidents and referrals to determine trends and patterns and use the information to adapt staff training and the personal, social and health curriculum
- staff fine-tune their use of assessment to ensure a more precise match of activities to pupils' needs and abilities, particularly for the most able pupils
- monitoring by senior leaders and advisors develops a better focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we observed pupils in lessons in key stage 2, key stage 3 and Year 10 and looked at pupils' work in their books. We spoke to pupils in lessons, around the school and at breaktimes. We met with members of the school's board of governors, representatives from local schools, you, your senior leadership team, teachers and other staff. We also reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding information and data on pupils' progress that you provided.