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Mr Simon Porter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Porter

Short inspection of De Aston School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017 with Sally Wicken, 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your senior leaders have high expectations for your pupils and are committed to seeing each fulfil their potential. You have ensured that there is a strong focus on the part of all staff to develop in the pupils the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to achieve well. You and your senior leaders closely monitor pupils' progress. Where you identify that pupils are not making at least the progress they should in their studies, you ensure that they receive appropriate support. Because of this, pupils make good progress across most of their subjects, with high proportions of some pupil groups, particularly the lower-ability pupils, making more than the progress expected of them. You are not complacent in this, however. You rightly recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that greater proportions of the most able pupils make more than the progress expected of them, by achieving the very highest grades.

You and your senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of your school, and of the areas that require further improvement. This is due to your robust self-assessment of all aspects of the school's performance. Through this self-assessment, you have previously identified that outcomes in mathematics, science and the sixth form needed to improve, to ensure that pupils, and students in the sixth form, could make consistently good progress. Because of the actions you have taken to resolve these issues, greater proportions of current pupils and students are now making at least the progress they should in these different areas of the school. You recognise that you need to embed these developments further, to ensure that

this improvement in pupils' and students' progress in these areas is sustained over time.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to develop further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that:

- activities always challenge pupils to deepen their understanding, including through extended pieces of writing
- teachers always plan activities that are set at the right level of difficulty for pupils.

As a school, you have undertaken a great deal of work in order to address these areas for improvement. For example, you have ensured that teachers set tasks that are appropriate to the needs and prior learning of their pupils, to enable pupils to become secure in their knowledge, skills and understanding. You have also provided teachers with comprehensive training to enable them to reflect upon their teaching, and develop it further. This training has included providing teachers with opportunities to share best practice with each other. You also recognise the value of working with other schools to learn from their practice, and share your own. For example, you work closely with the Lincolnshire Teaching Schools Alliance (LTSA), through which your staff are able to learn from, and contribute to the development of, teachers in other schools. Those staff whom inspectors met were appreciative of these training opportunities.

You and your senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through undertaking visits to lessons and checking pupils' books. You undertake these checks with subject leaders, to ensure that all leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, and the progress pupils are making. You are quick to identify those teachers whose practice is securing strong progress for their pupils, to ensure that they receive further opportunities to develop their teaching skills. You also ensure that those teachers whose classroom practice does not meet your high expectations receive appropriate support.

You have ensured that pupils receive comprehensive opportunities to secure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of fundamental British values. Through their citizenship studies, their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, and assemblies, pupils learn to respect people for their differences, including those people who are of a different sexual orientation. Because of this, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Those pupils whom inspectors met recognised the importance of respecting all people. They said that teachers encourage them to look after other pupils. These pupils demonstrated a respect for themselves, for each other and for their learning.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths, and the areas where further development is necessary. They recognise the strong leadership that you and your senior leaders bring to the school. Governors provide you with appropriate levels of challenge and support, to ensure that you maintain and build upon the school's provision. Governors

undertake their own visits to the school to check for themselves the quality of the school's provision. They also undertake regular audits of their own skills as a group, to ensure that the support they provide to the school is both comprehensive and effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders have created a culture of vigilance among your staff in relation to safeguarding. All staff are aware of the need to monitor their pupils' welfare, and to raise any concern they may have, however trivial they may feel that concern may be. Because of this, all staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff receive regular training in relation to safeguarding, and have a secure understanding of the types of abuse and the signs to look for. They fully understand what they should do where they have a concern about a pupil's welfare, including any concerns about the actions of another adult towards a pupil.

Senior leaders take quick and effective action where they have a concern regarding a pupil's welfare. They work closely with parents and with local agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they require. Senior leaders are tenacious in this respect, particularly where they feel that a pupil is not receiving the necessary support from external agencies. Senior leaders are aware of the issues in the local area that may affect their pupils' welfare. They provide staff and pupils with relevant information and support in relation to these issues, to ensure that pupils are safe.

You and your senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Leaders of mathematics and science have undertaken effective action to ensure that pupils make at least good progress in these subjects. Leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, to ensure that pupils receive the support they require to achieve well. The school's own performance information shows that pupils across all year groups now make at least good progress in these subjects.
- The differences between the achievement of the majority of the school's disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally continue to diminish. This is due to the rigorous support that these pupils receive, including through the school's effective use of the pupil premium.
- The lower-ability pupils make very strong progress across most of their subjects. This is because they receive effective support from their teachers and from the intervention support officers.

- Leaders have focused on ensuring that greater proportions of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make more than the progress expected of them. They have ensured that teachers set challenging activities for these pupils to complete, to secure their knowledge, skills and understanding. The school's performance information indicates that increased proportions of the most able pupils are now making more than the progress expected of them. However, leaders recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that all teachers consistently set these pupils suitably challenging work.
- Overall attendance at the school is good. The proportion of all pupils who are absent from school, including those who are regularly absent, is below national levels. This reflects pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their recognition of the value of education.
- Previously, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are absent from school, including those who are regularly absent, has been above national levels for all pupils. In response to this, leaders have provided close support to the disadvantaged pupils who are absent, to encourage them to attend. Because of this, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school is now below national levels for all pupils. However, although reducing, the overall absence of disadvantaged pupils remains above national levels.
- Leaders have focused on ensuring that sixth-form students make good progress. To this end, they have thoroughly reviewed the sixth-form provision, and have ensured that students receive greater support from teachers, particularly when they complete their private study. Current performance information indicates that increased proportions of students are now making good progress in their studies.
- All pupils whom inspectors met said that they feel safe at the school, and that they have staff they can approach if they have any concerns. All parents who expressed a view agreed that their child is safe at the school.
- Pupils receive comprehensive opportunities to learn how to be safe, particularly through assemblies and their PSHE education lessons. Through these, pupils have learned about the dangers of sexting, the effects of alcohol and drugs, and the importance of being self-aware and aware of the needs of other people.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they embed the developments in mathematics, science and the sixth form that have resulted in an improvement in current pupils' and students' outcomes, to ensure that these improvements are sustained over time
- all teachers set the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, suitably challenging tasks that enable them to secure their knowledge, skills and understanding, and make more than the progress expected of them
- the overall absence of disadvantaged pupils continues to reduce, to be at least in line with national levels for all pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leaders, subject leaders of English, mathematics and science, and the head of sixth form. Inspectors observed an assembly, and carried out 11 lesson observations. I conducted three of these with you, in your role as headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before and after school, as well as between lessons, during which time they spoke with pupils. Inspectors also met with a selection of pupils from Years 8, 9 and 10, and with a small group of sixth-form students. An inspector heard pupils read, including some most-able pupils. I met with a selection of staff, and, on a separate occasion, with 10 governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, attendance, the school's use of pupil premium funding, and achievement. I also took into account the school's own self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's single central record and the school's recruitment procedures. Inspectors took into account the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 27 responses parents submitted to the free-text service. Inspectors also took into account the 45 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 78 responses to the staff questionnaire. At the end of the day, I gave feedback to you, senior leaders and members of the governing body.