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Stewart Goacher
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Dear Mr Goacher

Short inspection of Newbridge High School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2017 with John Edwards 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 the school was judged to be good in May 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, your deputy headteacher and senior leaders are a committed and unified team, who have high expectations for pupils. You are very honest in your evaluation of the school, and therefore have a highly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your school development plans are detailed and well thought out. They include clear success criteria, which enable you and governors to measure the school's success in meeting these milestones.

You have taken effective action in response to the areas for improvement identified through your self-evaluation. For example, turbulence in staffing arrangements meant that pupils were not making the same consistently good progress in mathematics as they were in English and science. The use of supply teachers was negatively affecting pupils' experiences in this subject. You provided additional support to leadership and teaching in the department. As an interim measure, you and your assistant headteacher took on the teaching of some classes. Pupils are now making better progress in mathematics, and you have bought the school time in order to solve the issue of recruiting high-quality staff.

Your use of pupil premium funding has been effective in improving the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils. You and your staff looked very carefully at the evidence of which actions were likely to have the greatest impact and you tailored support for these pupils accordingly. Your current information shows that you have been successful in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are now making

faster rates of progress, not only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but also in other subjects. The appointment of an attendance officer has been instrumental in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils attend school more regularly. However, you recognise that the poorer attendance of girls has become a concern.

You have worked effectively to develop the school's middle leaders. These leaders are now more fully involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching in their own areas, and work with you and senior leaders to bring about the improvements. The departmental self-evaluation reports are a useful tool for middle leaders to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and to devise improvement plans. They also keep governors informed about the work of different departments. Many of your middle leaders are taking part in leadership development courses. Aware of the recruitment and retention difficulties your small school may face, you work hard to ensure that there are opportunities for staff to develop their practice, skills and experience.

You have formed effective partnerships with local schools that are helping you to improve and develop many aspects of the school's work. For example, you have worked with leaders and staff from the Ashby and Coalville Education partnership (ACE) to develop and implement a common system of assessing pupils across all schools. This ensures that pupils maintain a steady path of progression as they move between primary, high and upper schools. Pupils who spoke with inspectors understand the system well, and know what they have to do to ensure that they remain on their pathway. Likewise you use your links with the Forest Teaching School Alliance to best effect, to ensure that there are opportunities for teachers and leaders to develop, learn from and share best practice.

Following the school's previous inspection, you were asked to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. You have been successful in meeting this objective. For example, the 'professional learning communities' (PLCs) enable staff to learn from each other and work together to improve teaching. You ensure that the work of the PLCs is closely aligned to the school's main areas for improvement. You use performance management effectively to promote good practice, again ensuring that teachers' targets for improvement are meaningful and helpful to the whole school. Where you have identified teaching that was not up to the standard you expect, you put appropriate support in place.

The measures you have taken have ensured that teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Your teachers have good subject knowledge, and good command of their classrooms. They use the assessment system well to ensure that pupils know how to secure progress within their designated pathway, or move up to the next one. You have identified that too few of the most able pupils are working within the highest pathway, and have made this a key focus of your work this year. Inspectors agreed with your findings. There are too few opportunities in class for these pupils to develop their skills and talents in sufficient depth. While pupils know what the success criteria are for the highest pathway, teachers do not always provide them with a clear model of how to get there, or of what truly outstanding work looks like in their subject. Some parents expressed their concerns about

whether the homework set for pupils is sufficiently challenging. Inspectors saw little evidence of how homework was used to stretch and develop learning, especially for the most able pupils.

You have made some changes to the marking and feedback policy to ensure that it is not overly burdensome for teachers, but remains helpful for pupils. We saw some effective examples of the policy, for example where teachers identify which areas the class as a whole found difficult, and pupils could select which applied to them. There are instances where teachers correct the same errors time and time again, thus adding to their workload. You agree that there may be more efficient means of getting pupils to understand their errors, in line with your policy.

You have identified that a small number of pupils present particularly challenging behaviour and, on occasion, can be disruptive in class. Your records show that serious incidents are few and far between, and are dealt with appropriately. The pavilion, or 'Pav' room, is used well to provide a safe space for pupils who find it difficult to contain their emotions. Here, they receive one-to-one support and guidance from a trained counsellor, who is skilled in defusing difficult situations and re-focusing pupils on their learning. In our observations of learning, pupils concentrated well and there was no evidence of any low-level disruption. However, pupils' conduct as they moved around the school was not always of the high standard you expect.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors were enthusiastic about the range of clubs and extra-curricular activities on offer. At lunchtime, many were involved in organised sports such as football and dodgeball, while others played table tennis or read in the library. Parents recognise this aspect of the school's work as a real strength, praising the efforts of staff to provide a balanced, rounded education. As one wrote, 'I have been very impressed with the opportunities my child has had both within the curriculum and through enrichment activities. The facilities and resources on offer are fantastic and used effectively to benefit and inspire the pupils.'

Governors are effective in holding you and other leaders to account. The information you provide to them is helpful in enabling them to challenge you to bring about improvement. Through the committee structure, they monitor the school's progress against agreed actions. They use their skills and expertise well. For example, they carefully check that the school's safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and are working well to promote pupils' welfare.

You wisely seek out external advice and guidance, using colleague headteachers from the ACE partnership to review your work and help you identify strengths and weaknesses. A school improvement partner works across schools in the partnership to provide an external evaluation of your work. You and your governors recognise that greater accountability within these partnerships would benefit all schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your records show that staff take swift and appropriate action in response to any concerns they have about pupils' welfare. The designated safeguarding lead has an excellent understanding of the issues in the community that pupils may be vulnerable to. Information is shared with partner schools and with external agencies such as the police, so that all the relevant bodies know what the issues are, and who may be at risk. Regular meetings of the pastoral team ensure that staff keep a close eye on pupils about whom concerns have been raised.

The programme for personal education encompasses a number of different aspects, including safety and well-being. Specialist teachers deliver lessons on a range of issues from sex and relationships to health education. Your staff are particularly vigilant about online safety, and the school has won an award for this aspect of their work. Aware that parents share your concerns about pupils' safe use of technology, leaders have organised a number of workshops concerning this issue. During the inspection, pupils learned about the issue of child sexual exploitation in an assembly. Leaders ensured that they, and their parents, were thoroughly briefed and prepared for what was a profound and thought-provoking experience.

A number of parents praised the excellent pastoral support at the school. One wrote, 'Every child matters at this school. They should be proud of what they have achieved.'

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ensure that pupils develop the skills and understanding they need to be successful. You have worked effectively with partner schools to develop your own system of assessment that promotes pupils' progress across different phases of education. Pupils and their parents have a good understanding of the different pathways. Pupils know what the success criteria for their different subjects are. However, not all teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently.
- The use of the pupil premium funding has been effective. Disadvantaged pupils now attend school more regularly, are removed from class less frequently and are making better progress across almost all areas of the curriculum. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have taken effective action to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. They have provided support to the leadership and teaching within the department, and have addressed the school's temporary staffing difficulties. Governors evaluate the effectiveness of the school's development plan and hold leaders rigorously to account for raising standards in mathematics. Observations of learning, and careful scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that a greater proportion of pupils across the school are now making better progress in mathematics.
- The use of the 'Pav' room is effective in providing a safe haven for pupils to let off steam, receive one-to-one support and counselling and re-engage in their

learning. Leaders monitor and analyse information about removals from lesson carefully and use this to put the right support in place. As headteacher, you meet personally with all pupils who have been removed from class, as well as their parents. This has been effective in ensuring that all pupils fully understand the importance of good behaviour. The proportions of pupils that are removed from class, and that receive a fixed-term exclusion from school, are now reducing.

- Leaders have correctly identified that too few of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are working at higher levels and accessing the highest pathway. There is more to do to ensure that teachers regularly provide additional challenge for these pupils, including through the use of homework, and provide clear models of what outstanding work looks like.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers more regularly provide the most able pupils with classwork and homework that is more challenging, so that a greater proportion of them achieve higher standards
- homework for all pupils is effective in developing and deepening learning
- all teachers provide feedback to pupils in line with the school's marking policy
- the attendance of girls improves
- high standards for pupils' behaviour are consistently enforced throughout the day.

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

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and senior leaders to discuss the school's strengths and weaknesses and agree the areas of focus for the inspection. Meetings were also held with middle leaders, two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the school's designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors spoke formally with pupils from Year 7 and Year 9, and informally with others at lunchtime. Together with senior leaders, we observed learning in English, mathematics, science, French, drama and food technology. An inspector visited the 'Pav' room, the school's in-house counselling room, and an assembly. A telephone conversation was held with

a school improvement partner from the ACE partnership. A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, information about pupils' progress, records of safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying, the school's pupil premium report and examples of the monitoring of teaching. The lead inspector reviewed minutes of the meetings of the governing body. Inspectors took into account the 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 37 responses to the free text service.