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Ms Kathryn Coxall
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Coxall

Short inspection of Northcott School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2017 with Tracy Millard, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You have worked purposefully and with resolve to maintain the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Crucially, you have made sure that the school has adapted and developed in response to pupils' rapidly changing needs. You have secured the strong support of senior leaders and staff who share your deep commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for the children and young people you serve.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They work hard, apply themselves well and are determined and increasingly resilient learners. This is because teachers develop their social communication and interaction skills well, and set work which is interesting and challenging. Pupils told inspectors that you give them the help they need and, importantly, that you make sure they know how to improve their work. Indeed, pupils were full of praise for the care and patience with which you guide and support their learning. Occasionally, however, the most able pupils are not given challenging enough work and, as a result, they do not develop and deepen their understanding or learn how to use and apply their knowledge and skills.

Inspectors identified two areas for improvement at the school's last inspection: first, to improve teaching by making sure that pupils are well supported by teaching assistants and are set work which is closely matched to their different levels of ability; and second, to increase pupils' progress in mathematics. You have tackled these areas for improvement well. Teaching assistants are supporting pupils' learning more effectively. This is because they have better subject knowledge and

are more skilful in questioning pupils and breaking tasks down into small and achievable steps. Similarly, you have developed the mathematics curriculum and improved the teaching of mathematics. As a result, rates of progress have increased and more pupils are achieving entry level and GCSE mathematics qualifications at the end of Years 10 and 11. This is helping them to be better prepared for post-16 education and training.

You have transformed the way you assess and track pupils' progress since the last inspection. You already have a clearer picture of pupils' starting points and the progress they are making in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. You are using this information to develop teachers' practice and improve pupils' learning and progress. You have a realistic view of the effectiveness of these new systems and know that more work is needed to fully embed the changes you have made.

Governors keep a close eye on all areas of the school's performance and work effectively with you and the wider staff team. Governors value the high-quality reports and information they receive about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the progress pupils make. They use this well to challenge you about how you are improving the quality of education and the outcomes pupils achieve.

You use additional funding, including the pupil premium, well and make sure that disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in English and mathematics. However, you do not set clear or measurable enough targets for improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This means that it is difficult for you, senior leaders and governors to check whether the actions you are taking are having the intended impact.

The actions taken by you, your senior and middle leaders, and governors have placed the school in a strong position to secure further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

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

You and your staff are knowledgeable about the things that make children and young people vulnerable. You make sure that concerns about pupils are identified and reported in a timely way, and that prompt and robust action is taken to keep pupils safe and protect them from harm. Importantly, you make sure that pupils know how to stay safe – for example, when they are using computers, mobile phones and the internet.

You work closely and effectively with other professionals and services to make sure that pupils who are looked after by the local authority are well supported. You systematically check their attendance, learning and progress, and intervene quickly when they need additional help.

Inspection findings

- You have developed a new approach to assessing and tracking pupils' progress since the last inspection. While you know that this is 'a work in progress', the changes you have made are helping you to assess pupils' starting points accurately, set them challenging targets and track the progress they make. As a result, you quickly spot when pupils are not on track and provide the timely and well-targeted intervention and support they need. Your assessment information shows that pupils in key stages 1 to 4 make consistently strong progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. It also shows that disadvantaged pupils make similarly strong progress and achieve well.
- Key stage 4 pupils achieve an increasingly wide range of entry level, level 1 and GCSE qualifications. These outcomes represent strong progress from their lower than average starting points in Year 6. Crucially, more key stage 4 pupils are developing the skills and achieving the qualifications they need to move onto their chosen post-16 courses.
- You and your senior and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment systematically and well. As a result, you have a clear view of the strengths in teachers' practice and the areas of teaching and learning which need further work. You use this information well to provide high-quality training and support which teachers value. Equally, you are robust in challenging teachers and holding them to account for improving their practice and achieving better outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers use assessment information to make sure that learning activities are closely matched to pupils' interests and levels of ability. They question pupils skilfully and give them the help and support they need to confidently take the next step in their learning. Occasionally, the most able pupils do not move quickly enough onto more challenging work. In mathematics, for example, the most able pupils sometimes repeat work unnecessarily before they move onto more challenging tasks. This holds back their progress because they neither deepen their understanding nor develop their confidence and skills in using and applying what they already know and understand.
- You use additional funding effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who need help to catch up. You take great care to identify the barriers disadvantaged pupils face and you use the pupil premium to provide the additional support they need. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make the same strong progress as other pupils in English and mathematics. You also use additional funding to extend and enrich the curriculum, to increase pupils' attendance and to support the development of their social communication and interaction skills. Although you do this well, you do not evaluate the impact of these actions robustly enough. This is because you do not set clear and measurable step-by-step targets for these important outcomes for pupils. This makes it difficult for you, your senior leaders and governors to keep a close eye on the effectiveness and impact of some of your strategies and actions.

- Since the last inspection, you have radically changed the way you help pupils to take responsibility for their actions and manage their behaviour. The profoundly positive impact of this work can be seen in pupils' pride in themselves and their school, their conduct and positive attitudes to learning, and the significant reduction in behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions. Parents who spoke to inspectors or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were unequivocally positive about this and many other aspects of the school's work. Many said that their children are 'thriving' as a result of the highly effective care and support they receive.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school's new approach to assessment and tracking is fully embedded
- the most able pupils are set challenging work which develops and deepens their knowledge, skills and understanding
- the school's plans include clear and measurable step-by-step targets for the impact of additional funding on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and the development of pupils' social communication and interaction skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior and middle leaders, two representatives from the governing body and a group of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons with senior and middle leaders, looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to them about their learning. Inspectors considered the results from Parent View, including 13 written responses from parents. Inspectors also considered 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors examined a range of documents including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and information about pupils' progress.