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Mr Alun Williams
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of Norton Hill Academy

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 2017 with Gill Hickling, 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 since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your highly effective leadership has driven the school to a position of even greater success. Overall, the achievement of pupils in your school is strong, and is particularly evident in the 2016 GCSE results. The work that you are doing with pupils in Years 7 to 11, and with students in the sixth form, is consolidating and extending this success across the school.

You are supported well by your leadership team and your middle leaders. Together they are increasingly effective in ensuring that standards of teaching consistently reflect your high expectations. Your staff feel 'on board' with the changes you have made since the previous inspection. The staff survey that took place as part of this inspection emphatically backs this up.

The atmosphere in your school is one of calm purpose and enjoyment of learning. The behaviour of pupils around the school is exemplary. Pupils move around the site sensibly, demonstrating courtesy and consideration for each other and for visitors. In lessons, pupils behave exceptionally well. In all the lessons visited, pupils were fully engaged in their learning with the well-designed and challenging tasks provided by teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your school's policy for safeguarding is comprehensive and readily available on your website. The policy clearly identifies the staff who lead safeguarding, and how concerns can be raised by staff or parents. The procedures used to check the suitability of staff who work in the school are rigorous. A number of staff and governors have been appropriately trained to ensure that your recruitment process meets guidelines for effective practice. Staff and governors are kept up to date with safeguarding information. Training is thorough and regular, so all your colleagues know how to respond to any issues that arise. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality.

The culture in the school is one of high expectations of behaviour and safety, and staff and pupils clearly live up to this. Staff know their pupils well. Your pastoral care system is well designed and effective. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed that their child is happy and feels safe at the school. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe because teachers deliver key messages effectively in tutor time and in personal, social and health education lessons.

Inspection findings

- To judge if the school remained good, initially we looked at attendance. The school works conscientiously to promote good attendance. For example, if pupils are reported as absent due to illness, any concerns are followed up quickly with phone calls to parents. When absence is more persistent, the school works successfully with families to support them. The educational welfare service, counselling services and other external agencies are all used appropriately. However, the attendance rate for some disadvantaged pupils remains too low.
- The second area of work that we looked at was the school's use of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Your new leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils' support ensures that teachers understand the strategies they can use to raise the achievement of this group. Senior leaders plan carefully how funds will be spent and consider how barriers faced by these pupils can best be overcome. Governors carefully question school staff about the way the funds are used and the outcomes achieved by these pupils. These strategies have contributed to disadvantaged pupils rising to their teachers' high expectations. Teachers' consistency in this area has resulted in provision for disadvantaged pupils now being a strength of the school.
- We considered the progress that pupils make in languages. In 2016, progress in languages was not as strong as in other subjects. You have already taken steps to secure stronger progress in languages. You have appointed a new middle leader who is now well placed to ensure that progress in languages improves. Pupils spoke positively and enthusiastically about their learning in languages. We saw strong engagement by pupils and a high level of challenge presented by most teachers. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils'

progress in languages consistently matches pupils' progress in other subjects.

- The fourth area that we looked at was to see how the effectiveness of your middle leadership team has developed since the previous inspection. The middle leaders who spoke to inspectors were all able to describe in detail how their work drives up standards of teaching in their departments. They feel well supported by you and your senior leadership team. Middle leaders ensure that the school's teaching and learning policy is applied consistently across subjects. Middle leaders are having a positive influence on standards across the school because they are insisting on high expectations in their areas of responsibility.
- Finally, we looked at the work of the sixth form. In particular, we assessed the progress that students currently make, and how provision for them is being developed so that they achieve the highest possible grades. Tutors check that students use their time well and balance the needs of the different subjects they study. Teachers use information about students' attainment well. Teachers explain complicated concepts clearly and confidently, so most students make good progress. However, the full impact of the school's work in the sixth form is yet to be seen.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the changes made in the teaching of languages are carefully monitored and evaluated, so that progress is in line with the very strong progress made in other subject areas
- the work to support the progress of each sixth-form student continues and becomes consistent in all subjects, so that each student is stretched to achieve their best possible results
- all staff in the school maintain a focus on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, so that all pupils in this group are in a position to fulfil their potential at school.

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

Yours sincerely

Jerry Giles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and your senior team visited lessons with the inspection team. We looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their experience of lessons. Inspectors held meetings with pupils, middle leaders and governors. We looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, development plan and governors' minutes. We considered the views of the 66 parents, 77 members of staff and 48 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires.