

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Alex Hayes
University Technical College Norfolk
Old Hall Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR4 6FF

Dear Mr Hayes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to University Technical College Norfolk

Following my visit to your school on 24 November 2017 with my colleague Shane Langthorne HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave to us. Thank you also for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning, for all pupil groups, by matching the findings from lesson observations more precisely with assessment information and reviews of pupils' work
- strengthen further the work of middle leaders in:
 - evaluating the contribution that individual subject areas make to whole-school improvement
 - using the outcomes of subject evaluations to focus ongoing development planning so that all pupils are supported effectively to make good progress
- ensure that the current work to improve pupils' attendance is sustained so that attendance, for all groups, is at least in line with the national average and persistent absence continues to reduce.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff and governors, to discuss the improvement actions taken since the previous inspection. We also reviewed a wide range of documents, policies and other related information. This included information associated with safeguarding and child protection. In addition, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan were considered alongside the evidence inspectors gathered on the inspection day. Together with you and other senior leaders, inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, looked at pupils' books and spoke to them about their work.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and governors have taken steps to secure an improvement planning process that makes ensuring that all pupils receive a good standard of education a priority. Your plans are suitably focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Working together, you are making sure that the actions you are taking are subject to appropriate monitoring and review to check that they are working.

You explained to me how middle leaders develop subject plans which are based on your overview of whole-school improvement. In our meetings, we agreed that there is scope to further extend your middle leaders' ownership of these plans by involving them more closely in the overall development planning process. This is so that they continue to deepen their understanding of the subject area's contribution to the school's journey of ongoing improvement.

The previous inspection highlighted the need to gain greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. This was one of the lines of enquiry that we explored during the monitoring visit. It is clear that you, your senior leaders and governors are raising the bar in holding middle leaders to account through subject reviews and scrutiny visits. Standardised systems are beginning to establish higher expectations. As part of this standardisation, the emerging teacher profiles you showed me, while at an early stage of implementation, are potentially a useful tool in bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning over time.

As we discussed, there is a need for an even greater focus now on the impact of teachers' actions on pupils' learning and progress, across different groups, subjects and the range of pupils' abilities. This will help leaders to identify even more precisely what is working well, while pinpointing opportunities to share good practice and clarifying further what else needs to improve.

Better tracking of pupils' progress, regular monitoring and timetabled progress reviews are combining to give teachers more information to match suitable interventions with pupils' needs. A revised whole-school marking policy is in place. This is appropriately aimed at improving the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils

on marked work and highlighting the steps that pupils need to take to make better progress next time. Alongside these improvements, much work with other schools has gone into developing the accuracy of teachers' predictions as to how well pupils are likely to achieve in public examinations. This is an important aspect of the changes that were needed after some overgenerous estimations of key stage 4 pupils' and sixth-form students' outcomes in 2017.

The quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is improving. In part, this is because of the increasing expertise of your special educational needs coordinator and the ongoing specialist training under way. The revised approaches now in place are leading to more specifically targeted interventions for pupils. Nevertheless, your team recognise that this is still work in progress. They are fully aware of the need to continue to ensure that all relevant assessment information for these pupils is shared with teachers across the school. They also know that not all teachers are suitably confident in using the information available, and so further training is planned.

Sixth-form students confirmed that overall provision in the sixth form is also beginning to improve. In their meeting with the inspector, they spoke of better structures, in particular, to support their independent learning, and of clearer targets for the submission of their work. This was consistent with the evidence gathered during the inspector's observations of sixth-form lessons and from his discussions with the sixth-form leader.

In focusing on improving outcomes for sixth-form students, you are ensuring that the guidance given to sixth-form applicants is effective in steering them to, and retaining them on, the most appropriate programmes of study. Revisions to sixth-form induction days now offer opportunities for students' early familiarisation with subject requirements. This is so that they are better prepared to get off to a good start when they begin their new courses. You have also increased the amount of teaching time in some A-level subjects that you said students found more difficult last year.

In our discussions, we considered the 2016 and the provisional 2017 examination outcomes, which fell short of national expectations of pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4. While outcomes in engineering and mathematics remain strong, this is not the case in a number of other GCSE subjects. You are right to have made raising standards across all subjects a key focus of the improvement work under way.

You agreed with me that the school remains on the journey to secure good teaching over time and good outcomes for all pupil groups. You know that the variations in the rates of pupils' progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, the most able, between boys and girls, and across subjects and year groups, are still too wide. Consequently, senior leaders are working hard with middle leaders to raise standards through improvements to the leadership of teaching, learning and

assessment. This is so that all pupils, from their different starting points, are challenged to do as well as they can in all their lessons. You have rightly made this a high priority. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are improving and there are some early signs that pupils are making better progress.

Teachers' planning is more closely matched to pupils' needs because assessments of how well pupils are doing and what they need to work on are regular and more precise. The requirement for teachers to apply the school's marking policy is routinely reinforced by leaders across the school. Information from your team's regular checks shows that teachers are becoming more consistent in their approach to marking. Nevertheless, you know that there is more to be done to ensure that this aspect of the school's work is secure.

The previous inspection report noted that pupils' attendance was significantly below the national average. In considering this, inspectors looked at your most recent attendance tracking information and reviewed the effectiveness of improvement strategies now in place. As a result of raised expectations, coupled with the work of attendance officers and staff across the school, overall attendance is showing signs of improvement. Persistent absence rates are reducing, but as yet not quickly enough. The incidents of pupils arriving late to their lessons are less frequent because teachers are more consistent in using the sanctions set out in the school's policy.

Typically good working relationships are established between staff and pupils in lessons. These relationships underpin the positive behaviour and generally purposeful learning environment inspectors noted during the monitoring inspection. The new pastoral curriculum aims to improve pupils' personal, social and health education, but senior leaders recognise that further staff training is needed to ensure that all staff are confident in its application.

Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and continue to be effective. All the required staff recruitment checks are made and comply with statutory regulations. Child protection records are sufficiently detailed and appropriately managed. Staff are vigilant and understand their safeguarding duties to the pupils in their care.

External support

The school makes effective use of external support and additional funding, for example in using the additional funding for university technical college development to facilitate work with other schools to identify and share good practice.

Governors ensure that funds are spent well and that they are making a difference to the things that need to improve. This includes improvements to support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged 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 Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Dick
Her Majesty's Inspector