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Ms Siobhan Hearne
Principal
The Latimer Arts College
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Dear Ms Hearne

Short inspection of The Latimer Arts College

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2018 with Jo Ward and Janis Warren, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The Latimer Arts College remains a school where the strengths and talents of pupils and staff are very highly valued. You and your senior leaders have instilled high expectations for your pupils and are fully committed to ensuring that each fulfils their potential. The strength and passion of your leadership team 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. Where you identify that pupils are not making the progress they should in their studies, you ensure that they receive appropriate support. You rightly recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that the most able pupils make strong progress and achieve the very highest grades.

Since the school's previous inspection, you and your senior leaders have continued to inspire and motivate staff in your school. Your shared vision for continuous improvement is embraced by them. Your approach to be an outward-facing school, which collaboratively works with other schools, including primary schools, is a strength. You have ensured that there is a strong focus on the development of the whole child. You and your leadership team encourage the pupils to be fully involved in the wider aspects of school life that your school provides. Your ethos encourages pupils to aspire to achieve their potential, enjoy learning and to always try their best. During lessons observed, there were no occasions of low-level disruption that

affected learning, and most pupils were engaged and involved in their learning tasks.

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-evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance. Through this self-evaluation, you previously identified that the system for assessing at key stage 3 needed to improve. Because of the actions you and senior leaders have taken, there is now an assessment process that is understood by pupils, teachers and parents and carers. One pupil, who reflected the comments of many, said, 'I know and understand what my targets are, and I know how to achieve them.' You and your senior leaders systematically use this assessment process to identify any support and guidance needed for pupils to achieve their potential. You have rightly identified that more work is to be done to ensure that all pupils know and understand what opportunities there are for them, by evolving your impartial careers programme.

Since the previous inspection, you have undertaken a great deal of work to address 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 training to enable them to reflect on their teaching and develop further. This training has included providing teachers with opportunities to share best practice with others. Those staff whom inspectors met are appreciative of the training opportunities the school provides. However, you rightly identify that this training needs to be fully embedded and utilised by all staff.

You correctly identified through our observations together that more is to be done to consistently challenge all pupils in all lessons. Where we saw stretch and challenge for more-able pupils, they were fully engaged in their learning. One pupil, reflecting the thoughts of others, said, 'I like the work to be hard in lessons; it challenges you.' You were able to articulate ways in which you feel the school will develop this area, and your continuous commitment to work and learn from others demonstrates, again, your desire to ensure that all pupils surpass their potential.

Senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through undertaking visits to lessons and checking pupils' books. You and your senior leaders 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 sound progress for pupils. Where teachers' classroom practice does not meet your high expectations, you provide appropriate support.

Members of the governing body 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 leaders bring to the school. Governors provide you with appropriate levels of challenge and support, to ensure that you maintain and build on the school's provision. For example, governors questioned and debated the decision to move to

a two-year key stage 3 curriculum. Governors undertake their own visits to the school to check for themselves the quality of the school's provision. They also undertake a skills audit to ensure that the support they provide to the school is both comprehensive and effective.

Parents who responded to the Ofsted online Parent View survey commented that they feel their child is happy at your school. The parents who responded to the survey identified that they feel more 'comfortable' with the way the school reports the progress of their child. However, you have identified that the use of the school's 'progress wheel' now needs to be fully embedded. Some parents commented that they feel their child is encouraged to be, and is, involved in a range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities provided by the school. Inspectors were able to see that there is a wide range of activities provided for all pupils, which allows them to be engaged in the softer skills of education. A good example of this is the keep fit class run by the assistant headteacher to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders have created a culture of vigilance among your pupils and staff. Pupils 'feel safe' at the school and pupils spoken to could articulate clearly where and who they would go to if they felt they were at risk. Governors, staff and senior leaders are fully aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The designated senior leader for safeguarding (DSL) is a tenacious leader who ensures that all staff are aware of current safeguarding updates, and there is regular training for this. You and your DSL take quick and effective actions where there is a concern regarding pupils' welfare. You and senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. The culture of being happy and safe at school, which has been created by you and your senior leaders, means that pupils can, and do, enjoy being at school. The school provides a range of opportunities to educate all pupils about how to stay safe in and beyond school, and senior leaders effectively evaluate whether these opportunities have impact. The pupils spoken to throughout the inspection were unanimous that they would get support from the school if they ever needed it.

Inspection findings

- The differences between the achievement of the school's disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school continues to diminish. This is due to the rigorous and individualised support that these pupils receive, as well as the effective use of the pupil premium funding. Current tracking would suggest that the gap is continuing to close in English and mathematics as well as other subjects included in the English baccalaureate. There is a greater focus on ensuring the rapid progress for disadvantaged pupils, and opportunities are tailored more closely to their needs.
- You and your leadership team have evolved an internal assessment system to track and monitor the progress of all pupils at the school. You and your senior leaders have put in place regular 'progress and intervention meetings' with your

subject leaders so that you can closely examine the information and implement any appropriate actions. You are determined to utilise this system to ensure that all pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress. Internal assessment suggests that pupils are working effectively towards their appropriate targets. The system allows pupils to have a clear process by which they can learn and develop their skills, thus giving them direction to the next target.

- You have rightly identified that persistent absence for pupils entitled to free school meals remains a concern. Although there have been improvements made from this time last year, the proportion of free-school-meal pupils persistently missing school remains above national average. You have also recognised that overall attendance for all pupils needs to improve further. However, the senior leader responsible for this area has implemented new strategies and rewards to address this concern, and one effective example is a bespoke breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils, which is well attended. There is now a more robust approach to formally 'tackling' persistent absence, and parents are held accountable for their child's attendance where appropriate. During the observations and throughout the day, punctuality was exemplary. Even with difficult weather conditions, pupils showed that they want to be on time and in their lessons.
- Your outward-looking approach to learn from other schools within and beyond your local area is allowing for teaching and learning to evolve at the school. You embrace new ideas and strategies and empower your senior leaders to take the lead in ensuring that learning continues to improve. The development of teaching strategies has meant that, where there are challenge and high expectations, pupils respond effectively. This strategy was seen during our joint observations in English, religious studies and history. You accurately identify that the consistency of strategies being used in the school, in particular the ways to stretch and challenge the most able pupils, remains a key focus area.
- You and other leaders have invested time into developing the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced for most pupils. You acknowledge that some pupils involved in the Year 7 catch-up programme need to have full access to the curriculum. The opportunities for pupils to experience a range of subjects and qualifications is now being carefully tracked to ensure that there is a seamless transition into key stage 5 education. However, some pupils stated that they are not clear enough on what their option choices are and they believe they can pick what they want. You rightly identified that this is an area that needs to be developed further. The effective use of your systematic independent careers, advice and guidance programme is continuing to grow and develop. Pupils in all year groups can have full access to impartial advice and guidance. The enterprise projects that senior leaders coordinate encourage pupils to be actively involved in learning skills needed for the modern-day workplace. One such event, the 'pound project', saw many pupils develop entrepreneurial and communication skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities to share the best practice become an embedded part of school life so that teaching in all subjects is consistently strong
- overall absence for all pupils continues to improve and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils reduces, so attendance is at least in line with the national average
- the impact of curriculum changes made at the school is monitored so that all pupils have the same opportunities and their needs are met
- the impartial advice and guidance offered to pupils are fully embedded so that pupils explicitly know what choices they have in and beyond modern Britain
- outcomes improve, particularly for the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Wicken
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors visited a good number of lessons and, when possible, were joined by members of your senior leadership team. Inspectors looked at progress in books during these joint observations and spoke to pupils when appropriate during lessons. Inspectors met with two groups of pupils across a range of year groups, with the exception of Year 8 as these pupils were at a 'Big Bang' event. I met with you, your vice-chair of governors, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, business manager and DSLs. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance, achievement and the school's use of pupil premium funding. I also considered the school's context and its own self-evaluation. I scrutinised the school's single central record and recruitment procedures. I considered the 102 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. At the end of the day, I gave feedback to you, senior leaders, your vice-chair of governors and other members of the governing body.