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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Martyn Jobling
Principal
The National CofE Academy
Annesley Road
Hucknall
Nottingham
NG15 7DB

Dear Mr Jobling

Short inspection of The National CofE Academy

Following my visits to the school on 28 February and 5 March 2018 with Andrew Fulbrook and Julie Sheppard, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During this time, you and the governing body, the National Church of England Academy Trust, have worked in partnership with the Diverse Academies Trust to continue to improve the quality of education at the school. You have opened a successful sixth-form centre in collaboration with The Holgate Academy.

The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are keen to learn and to do their best. They are welcoming to visitors and enjoy coming to school. Pupils recognise the importance of good attendance and the work that the school does to encourage them to attend regularly. They explained to inspectors that their teachers have high expectations of them. Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe in the wider community. This includes developing an awareness of radicalisation and extremism, and an understanding of diversity and how to live healthily.

Pupils are mostly taught well and they enjoy their learning. Teachers usually present them with high levels of challenge. Teachers develop pupils' ideas and their understanding through detailed questioning in many lessons. They provide pupils with useful feedback on their work that helps them to improve it and make good progress. These features are not yet consistent in all subjects, however. Not all

teachers plan effectively enough to meet individual pupils' needs. This leads some to make slower progress than they should.

Leaders plan the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and to support them in moving to the next steps in their education. Pupils feel well supported in making choices from a wide range of subjects and in planning their futures beyond school.

Behaviour in lessons is well managed. Pupils said that disruption rarely has an impact on their learning. They have seen improvements in the school and feel well supported in planning the next steps in their education. Pupils feel that staff are approachable.

Since the previous inspection, you have carried out detailed evaluations of the quality of education and of pupils' attainment and progress. These provide a clear view of pupils' achievement and the quality of education provided by the school. Leaders' overall judgements of the school's performance, however, are too generous, particularly when comparing the school with other schools nationally.

You have used your detailed knowledge of the school to determine the priorities for improvement. This has led to training for teachers and some changes to the curriculum offered to pupils. Teachers now provide pupils with greater levels of challenge in lessons. Some of the weaknesses you have identified, however, are long-standing. Staff recruitment and long-term absences have presented you with additional challenges to overcome. Nevertheless, improvements have not been consistent across all subject areas and pupils' progress in a few subjects is too slow.

Safeguarding is effective.

You take the safeguarding of the pupils very seriously. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities for the safeguarding of pupils. The school's record of recruitment checks is detailed and well maintained. Staff are clear about the procedures to follow when they have concerns about a pupil.

Pupils said that they feel safe and that there are staff they can speak with if they need help. They are taught how to ensure that they stay safe, and understand many of the challenges facing them in the world outside school. Pupils said that they feel that bullying is dealt with effectively. They learn how to use the internet safely and understand the potential risks online. Their personal development lessons include work to understand the risks of substance misuse and how to enjoy healthy relationships. Pupils appreciate the work done by peer mentors and tutors to help individuals to overcome personal difficulties when they arise. The governing body is effective in holding leaders to account for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection findings

- Governors know the school well and understand their roles. They work closely in partnership with the Diverse Academies Trust to hold leaders to account for pupils' education. They consider detailed evaluations of the school's provision

provided by leaders from within the school and the partnership. Governors have worked with leaders to identify weaknesses in provision and to plan how to tackle them. Leaders are unrealistic in their judgements about standards and the quality of education, however, when comparing the school with other schools nationally.

- The attainment and progress of pupils by the end of key stage 4 are, on the whole, in line with those seen nationally. However, their rates of progress in different subjects were uneven. Despite a sometimes over-generous view of the school's performance, leaders have taken effective action to tackle some of the weaker areas identified in the 2017 key stage 4 examination results.
- Leaders have provided training for teachers where they have identified weaknesses. This training has led to improvements in the English department, for example, where inspectors saw evidence of high levels of challenge and effective questioning. However, improvements in other areas have been less rapid. In a few subjects, there are ongoing weaknesses that mean that pupils do not always make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers generally set high expectations and challenging activities. They develop pupils' ideas and provide effective feedback that supports learning. The work produced by pupils in some subjects is impressive. They exercise care in producing high-quality extended writing in history, for example. This is not yet consistent across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is well led and allows pupils to prepare well for the next steps in their education. The subjects offered match pupils' interests and enable them to achieve well.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. Their progress is at least in line with, and often above, national averages. Collaboration with other schools is enabling leaders to bring about continued improvement. Students produce high-quality work and act on teachers' feedback to develop their understanding. Arrangements for travel between the school and the sixth-form centre are well organised.
- Leaders have improved the way they check on pupils' attendance. More rigorous checks, rewards for high attendance and the use of external partners have all raised the profile of attendance. Pupils' attendance rates are now better than national averages. Leadership of this area is effective. Leaders now check closely that their work is making a positive difference to attendance. As a result, practice has improved. Pupils also recognise the importance of good attendance and welcome the work leaders have done to encourage this.
- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Exclusion rates are low and support for pupils is effective in helping them to learn how to behave appropriately. Partnerships with other organisations have contributed effectively to this work. Pupils behave appropriately in lessons and around the school, even when not directly supervised.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- plan the school's development from a more realistic overall judgement of its performance, making use of the detailed evaluations available of the quality of education provided and of pupils' attainment and progress
- tackle the remaining identified weaknesses in teaching more quickly so that pupils' progress is at least good in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Colling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you and other senior leaders. Further discussions were held with members of the governing body and other teachers. We also met the executive principal and spoke with the chief executive officer of the Diverse Academies Trust. We met three groups of pupils and informally spoke with others in lessons and around the site at breaktimes. Jointly with you and school leaders, we observed learning in a variety of subjects and looked at the work in pupils' books. A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. Records of monitoring of teaching, information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, and minutes of the governing body were examined. We took into account the 120 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 77 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff and 55 responses to its survey of pupils.