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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Raymond Henshaw
Headteacher
Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College
Minsthorpe Lane
South Elmsall
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF9 2UJ

Dear Mr Henshaw

Short inspection of Minsthorpe Community College, A Specialist Science College

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2018 with Michael Cook and Andrew Cummings, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher, shortly before the last inspection, you have ensured that leaders have adopted a strategic and measured approach to improvement priorities. Alongside these actions, the capacity of the school leadership has been enhanced through key internal and external appointments, bringing together the necessary skills and experience required. Staff are positive about the training, coaching and guidance that they have received from school leaders.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. They are committed to supporting the school and bringing about the necessary improvements. They work closely with the school's leaders and hold them to account effectively.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise achievement further by improving the quality of teaching, so that more is outstanding, and none requires improvement. You have ensured that professional support is in place for those teachers who you identify as needing it. Leaders are relentless in checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and hold staff to account for pupils' progress. As a result, any weakness in teaching is quickly identified and tackled effectively.

Leaders have an accurate view of pupils' progress through their rigorous approach to the analysis of school progress information. Leaders, at all levels, have ensured that assessments are accurate and reliable, including through their work with other schools and local educational partnerships. You have been checking closely on those pupils who are disadvantaged, and as a result, these pupils have at least caught up with others nationally and in the school who have similar starting points. Leaders now have a focus on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The progress of this group of pupils is now beginning to improve, but this is still at an early stage.

Over the last two years, the progress of pupils in modern foreign languages and of the most able pupils in science has lagged behind that of other pupils in other subjects. There remains work to be done in these areas, but the progress of current pupils is beginning to strengthen in science, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in modern foreign languages has improved considerably.

You have also rightly identified that levels of fixed-term exclusion have been too high and rising over the last three years. Regardless of this, you were determined to insist upon high standards of behaviour. You are now beginning to see the results of a consistent approach to managing behaviour in the school, through much reduced instances of exclusion this year.

The proportion of pupils who were regularly absent in 2016/2017 was significantly higher than the national average. You have applied a wide range of strategies to combat low attendance. You acknowledge, however, that there remain too many disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities who do not attend school regularly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection procedures. As a result, they are confident in their understanding of the actions they would need to take if they have any concerns about pupils. The designated safeguarding leaders can demonstrate their knowledge and experience through the records they keep. These records evidence the prompt actions that the school takes when safeguarding concerns arise, including the support the school initiates through working with external agencies.

A number of pupils access education off-site, attending local providers. Staff ensure that the appropriate checks are carried out, making sure that these pupils are safe. Any absences are followed up rigorously and pupils' progress is checked against the school's expectations for them.

Pupils were found to have positive attitudes to learning in their lessons, showing respect towards teachers and their peers. Any minor disruption to lessons, where it was observed, was rare. Pupils spoke positively about their experience at the school and reported that pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other. Pupils also

spoke positively about the guidance they have been given about keeping themselves safe, as well as about the excellent information, advice and guidance they are provided with to inform their future pathway choices.

Many parents and carers responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive, and they reported that, in their view, the quality of pastoral support and care for pupils was of a very high standard.

Inspection findings

- Over the last two years, the progress some pupils have made in modern foreign languages and science has been more variable than in other subjects in the school. The work in pupils' books in modern foreign languages is now showing that they are beginning to make stronger progress. The leader of modern foreign languages has a very accurate view of what good progress looks like and has introduced strategies which are having a measurable impact. Senior school leaders have supported the development of leadership in this area recently, through a determined and focused approach to improving the quality of assessment. As a result, more accurate assessments are now allowing leaders to identify where pupils will benefit from intervention and, specifically, which type of intervention they need to make better progress.
- The improvements being made in science are at a much earlier stage than in modern foreign languages. In key stage 3, pupils are enthusiastic learners and teaching and learning is of a high quality. Progress is less strong in key stage 4 for the most able pupils. Leaders are aware of this and a wide range of interventions are being embedded into teaching and learning through support and coaching programmes. Consequently, leaders are beginning to see more regular stretch and challenge as an integral part of planning for learning. However, leaders are aware that there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils make good progress in science.
- The school has a higher than average number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In 2017, these pupils made slower progress across all subjects than other pupils who had similar starting points. You have recognised that this is a priority for improvement work and have taken decisive action in your response to the disappointing outcomes for this group of pupils. The school has appointed a senior leader with specialist knowledge of SEN pupils and this has had a significant impact. Staff are trained to a high standard and governors now have a much keener awareness of the work being done to improve the outcomes of these pupils. There is now more effective targeted support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in classrooms, and where this is the case, pupils make much stronger progress. However, this practice is not yet universal in all classrooms and there remains further work to do to ensure that it is.
- You have, rightly, continued to focus on improving pupils' attendance. Because of this, attendance for all groups of pupils is improving. However, you recognise that the number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, who are regularly absent from school, is still too high. The school has a dedicated and committed team with responsibility for improving pupils'

attendance. They apply a wide range of effective strategies, including visits into the community to encourage better attendance. Pupils speak positively about the importance of good attendance and most pupils attend school regularly.

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils maintain a culture of good behaviour around the school. You have recognised, however, that exclusions have been too high in the past. Nevertheless, you remained confident that school behaviour systems such as the 'Minsthorpe Way' would eventually encourage pupils to respect staff, each other and develop positive attitudes towards their learning. Now that the 'Minsthorpe Way' is well established, exclusions have dramatically reduced this year. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about their learning and are positive about their experiences at the school. Pupils say that bullying is rare and, if it does occur, school leaders deal with it quickly and effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in all subjects
- pupils make good progress in science and modern foreign languages
- they continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Barry Found
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, geography, computing, health and social care, music and in a 'nurture' lesson.

Inspectors met with you and senior and middle leaders. I also met with a small group of governors, including the chair and vice chair of governors and a staff governor. Inspectors met with pupils from Year 7 to Year 12 and talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaktime and lunchtime about their views and experience at the school.

Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books with subject leaders of English and modern foreign languages. I also scrutinised a selection of English, mathematics and science books. We also looked at a range of school documentation, including current assessment information, leaders' school self-evaluation information, records about the behaviour and attendance of current pupils and information about safeguarding.

We took account of 85 responses to the staff questionnaire and 248 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 68 written comments by parents.