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Ms Janise Marillat
Headteacher
Thomas Knyvett College
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Dear Ms Marillat

Short inspection of Thomas Knyvett College

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 2018 with Suzanne Richards, 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 carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have been unwavering in your determination to improve the life chances of your pupils by catering for the needs of each individual. Supported by a dedicated and talented team of senior and middle leaders, you have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and the culture of aspiration within the school and the local community. Staff use their extensive knowledge of every pupil to provide the best support possible for each of them to develop their learning and understanding. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.

You and your staff take full advantage of the size of the school to get to know your pupils in depth. Relationships are warm and respectful, and there is a strong sense of everyone working together to fulfil the school motto of 'bringing out the best'. Pupils behave very well in class and around the building. Staff offer excellent support to pupils, which is acknowledged and valued by pupils and parents alike. As one parent said: 'The school supports my child as a whole person and the pastoral team is amazing.'

The previous inspection recommended that pupils were given greater challenge in their learning. To do this, you have encouraged teachers to use 'thinking hard devices' with their pupils. Staff have been supported with this strategy, among others, through effective training to develop their professional skills, often with colleagues in other schools within the trust. As a result, teachers have higher

expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. However, you recognise that some pupils, especially the most able pupils, could be challenged even further to help them make more rapid progress and so reach higher standards.

You have also worked hard to communicate more effectively with parents and have used a range of strategies, such as social media and information evenings. Community confidence in the school is growing because of rising results, the personalised approach and the strenuous efforts you make to involve parents. As a result, pupils attend school more regularly than in the past and the school roll is rising rapidly.

Leadership at all levels of the organisation is excellent. Systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are rigorous and well organised. The trustees and governors know the school extremely well and offer support and challenge in equal measure. School staff share your ambition for the school and are loyal and hard working. They take full advantage of the collaborative and developmental opportunities that membership of the trust affords them. This is having a positive effect on raising standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength. Leaders have ensured that a culture of safeguarding permeates the school and all staff understand their responsibilities. Record-keeping is meticulous and fit for purpose. Trustees, governors and staff are trained appropriately and keep their knowledge up to date. There is an effective electronic system for staff to log any concerns, which ensures that issues are dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

The school has a strong record of engagement with outside agencies and staff always go the extra mile to ensure that pupils get the support that they need. Leaders identified that increasing numbers of pupils need help with mental health issues, so specific strategies to support such pupils have been introduced.

Pupils, parents and staff who responded to the online questionnaires said that the school was a safe place. Pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed this. They said that they knew who to go to if they had any difficulties, and that they felt confident that their concerns would be dealt with.

Pupils are provided with many learning opportunities about how to stay safe through personal, social and health education lessons, in tutor time and through assemblies. They understand how to protect themselves from threats that they may routinely face, such as online or on social media.

Inspection findings

- Inspectors visited a number of lessons to see how the quality of teaching is helping pupils to make good progress, especially the disadvantaged and the most able. Specifically, inspectors looked at the level of challenge, especially in English.
- Inspectors saw pupils of all abilities and across year groups making strong gains in their learning in a number of subjects, such as English, science, mathematics, art, music and geography. In these lessons, teachers had high expectations of what pupils could do and achieve. They asked probing questions to test pupils' understanding, and there was evidence of some of the 'thinking hard devices' that the school has introduced. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, pupils had to memorise the features of a xylem cell before the teacher blanked the screen and asked them to explain what they remembered to a partner. Pupils rose to the challenge and enjoyed the competitive element. Pupils' books are generally well presented and show good progress over time.
- Where learning is most effective, teaching follows the school's policy of giving pupils specific advice and guidance about how to improve their progress. While inspectors saw some good use of this strategy, other guidance given to pupils was less effective because some staff did not follow the school's policy.
- Disadvantaged pupils are a significant cohort in the school and many start from a low base. Overall, they make as much progress as their peers because of high-quality teaching. All pupils' learning is rigorously tracked and interventions are quickly put in place if they fall behind. However, some most-able pupils could be challenged even further to enable them to make the rapid progress needed to reach the higher standards.
- Leaders have thoroughly analysed the English results from last year to see where more improvements could be made. As a result, teachers have focused on developing pupils' skills, such as writing sentences more fluently. Rigorous and frequent assessment of each skill is helping pupils to make greater gains in their learning, and current pupils are making more substantial progress in this subject.
- Inspectors looked at how the curriculum is helping to meet the needs of all learners. Leaders review the curriculum annually and make appropriate changes to meet the aspirations of each year group. The emphasis is constantly on what is right for the individual pupil, and there is a clear rationale for each decision made.
- Pupils entering key stage 4 receive individual guidance to make their GCSE option choices. All pupils study a humanities subject and increasing numbers are choosing a foreign language due to stronger leadership in this previously weaker area. A small group of vulnerable pupils in Year 7 follow a programme designed to build their confidence and enter mainstream classes when they are ready. This has resulted in these pupils making significant progress. Pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language receive targeted support so that they catch up quickly. Literacy support is provided to those who need help to read with greater fluency.
- Pupils' wider skills are being developed through the '5Cs' (community, culture,

character, contentment, currency) programme, which is currently delivered in tutor time. Leaders have recognised the significant impact of this programme on pupils' learning and development and have therefore decided to allocate more curriculum time to it next year. As a result of the well-thought-out curriculum, tailored to pupils' individual needs as far as possible, pupils are aiming high and are well prepared for their future.

- Inspectors also reviewed how well the school is promoting pupils' positive attitudes to learning. In 2016, the number of exclusions rose sharply due to a 'zero tolerance' approach to misbehaviour. Since then, leaders have adopted a strategy of helping pupils to reflect on any misbehaviour and giving them support to improve. In class, inspectors saw the positive impact of this area of the school's work at first hand. Pupils are well behaved and very engaged in their learning. They are eager to do well, set to work quickly and express their ideas confidently. Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Consequently, the number of exclusions and isolations has fallen dramatically and pupils are focusing more keenly on their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers plan work which challenges pupils to think harder, enabling the most able to reach higher standards
- staff use the school's strategy for helping pupils to improve their learning more consistently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paula Sargent
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your leadership team, middle leaders, and staff responsible for attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. I met two members of the board of trustees and had a further meeting with the chair of the board of governors. We met pupils in Years 7 to 10, some informally in lessons, and interviewed a range of pupils in a formal meeting in which we discussed their learning and views on school life. We visited lessons across a range of subjects and year groups, together with members of the leadership team, to observe pupils'

learning and to look at work in their books.

We looked at a range of school documentation, including current assessment information, the school's improvement plan, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, and attendance and behaviour information for current pupils. Inspectors considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils, 56 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 57 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 55 written comments by parents.