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Ms Gill Fox
Headteacher
Kings Norton Girls' School
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Dear Ms Fox

Short inspection of Kings Norton Girls' School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 2018 with David Hughes, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You provide strong and effective leadership and have built a committed staff team over the past 10 years. You and your senior team have created a positive learning culture, which pupils talk about with pride. The chair and vice-chair of governors are unequivocal in their support of your leadership. They appreciate that Kings Norton Girls' School is at the heart of the local community because of your unflinching commitment.

The school continues to grow in popularity with parents and carers as a result of your leadership. Pupils from the local boys' school told inspectors that they wanted to attend your sixth form because of its reputation. Despite competition from local grammar schools, your school is oversubscribed. Pupils say that this is because of the school's excellence in securing success.

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They say that teachers teach them well and always challenge them in lessons. Pupils are full of praise for the variety of opportunities that teachers provide to improve their progress. For example, they say that regular knowledge tests and critical feedback from teachers help them

understand how to improve their work. Pupils say that you are uncompromising in your ambition for them to be successful.

Pupils in all year groups struck up conversations with inspectors with ease. Pupils are polite and articulate. Their behaviour is impeccable. Younger pupils appreciate the care and attention given by Year 11 pupils who act as 'companions'. These senior pupils coach and mentor the younger pupils effectively. As a result, pupils learn how to develop skills of independent learning, which increases their confidence when completing challenging pieces of homework.

You have created a superb culture of high aspirations in which pupils can flourish. You are justifiably proud of your pupils' achievements and you have inspired your staff to communicate the highest expectations of all. As a result, the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. The school offers a broad and challenging curriculum which pupils say inspires them to achieve very challenging targets. Consequently, this helps pupils participate very well in lessons. As a result, pupils are highly ambitious and crave excellence. You and your senior leaders have been very successful in ensuring that pupils make substantial and sustained progress. This is because the tracking of pupils' progress is a strong feature of the school.

Parents appreciate the excellent care and support that you and your staff give to their children. One parent said, 'My daughter has excelled at this school.' Another said, 'Excellent pupil relationships underpin this school.' One parent simply wrote, 'I am proud my daughters attend this school.'

At the school's last inspection, you were charged with increasing the amount of teaching that is outstanding. You and your staff attended to this by ensuring that teachers challenge pupils with effective questioning, which pushes pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding effectively. As a result, teaching has improved still further. However, there are still a few aspects of teaching which you know could improve even further. These include promoting literacy even more strongly across the curriculum and ensuring that a higher proportion of more-able pupils secure the highest grades.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and staff have worked hard to create a strong culture of safeguarding. Designated safeguarding leaders have created effective models of communication for staff and pupils to share information. You and your safeguarding leaders have an accurate analysis of the impact of the high-quality training, given during the year, about accurately reporting safeguarding concerns. As a result, staff use the school's safeguarding processes to report occurrences very effectively. This enables designated safeguarding leaders to respond to any worries in a timely manner and to intervene early, if necessary.

The management of attendance is effective. You and your staff follow up all absences immediately. You ensure that pupils who have been educated off-site

receive the right support during reintegration to school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Above all, pupils report that they feel safe. Staff say that this school is a safe place for pupils. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are unanimous in their view that this school keeps their children safe.

Inspection findings

- You identified that the 2017 published examination results for the sixth-form students did not make the progress they should have done. As a result, you and your senior leaders reviewed the 16 to 19 programme of study. Teachers and teaching assistants now provide immediate feedback and support for students. Consequently, sixth-form students are resolute in their determination to do well. Furthermore, teachers' questioning challenges students. Inspectors saw many very effective interventions during lessons which strengthened students' understanding and analysis.
- Additionally, you and your staff have introduced a new qualification, the Educational Project Qualification (EPQ) to help students secure the highest grades at A level. Students told inspectors that this qualification allows them to practise independent research and presentation skills. Twenty-one students successfully completed this qualification. Results published in November 2017 show that half of these students secured A* to A grades in their EPQ. Additionally, one third of disadvantaged students secured a value-added score for this qualification that was not only positive but also twice that of their non-disadvantaged peers. This new qualification has boosted students' confidence, especially in preparing for other public examinations and in submitting university applications.
- You commissioned a review of mathematics because pupils' outcomes were lower than in other subjects. The review found that progress was not as strong because pupils' basic skills in mathematics were not fully secure. As a result, you appointed a different team of experienced teachers of mathematics. These teachers routinely ensure that pupils understand the basic skills required to help them tackle higher-level tasks. Consequently, pupils are confident in responding to questions that probe their mastery of mathematics. Inspectors observed pupils making strong progress and excelling in tackling complex problems. In addition, governors described how they had held you and your senior staff accountable for this strategy to improve outcomes in mathematics.
- You have used the pupil premium funding very well and in a targeted manner to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, you have reduced class sizes so that disadvantaged pupils receive intensive support. Additionally, you have appointed an inclusion manager to help any pupil who needs or requests additional support. You and your senior staff monitor the use of this additional funding carefully. As a result of effective use of the funding, current assessment information about disadvantaged pupils shows a significant improvement in their progress and a substantial reduction in the gap between their attainment and that of their non-disadvantaged peers.

- You have worked effectively to reduce variation in outcomes between subjects. Your analysis of assessment information shows that you and your teachers are ensuring stronger progress in certain subjects. For example, inspectors visited a number of Year 10 lessons and could see the positive developments in these pupils' work since the start of the academic year. Pupils routinely use subject-specific language with confidence. They are proud of their portfolios and the strident progress made. Consequently, these pupils are fully engaged in their learning. They could talk coherently about how their work had improved and what they needed to do to be even better.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- minor inconsistencies in teaching are dealt with swiftly, so that every pupil is enabled to excel
- students in the sixth form continue to make accelerated progress in order to achieve the highest grades.

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

Yours sincerely

Antony Edkins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, your deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. We visited several classes, with you or with other senior leaders, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We talked with pupils at breaktime. I met with the chair and vice-chair of governors. We scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, safeguarding information and your school development plan. We considered 116 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 31 free-text responses. We considered 52 responses from staff and 106 responses from pupils to their respective online inspection questionnaires.