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Mr Ian Rimmer  
Principal  
King James's School  
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HD4 6SG

Dear Mr Rimmer

### **Short inspection of King James's School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2018 with Janet Gabanski, 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 March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as principal in 2015, you have ensured that the school's ethos has been further developed and is celebrated. Governors and staff describe 'the King James way'. You use the school's history to promote its identity well, for example highlighting events in the school's history alongside other major historical events.

Responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, show that nearly all parents would recommend the school to others. One parent spoke for many, describing the school as, 'A lovely, friendly school, full of history and character, offering an excellent learning environment in a wonderful setting.'

Pupils concur with their parents' views and most speak positively about their school. They note, for example, that 'all the teachers look after you' and 'are nice'. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their consistently above-average attendance and positive attitudes to learning. Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy, and expectations of pupils' good behaviour have been raised. Pupils say that behaviour has improved. At breaks and lunchtime, the atmosphere is relaxed. In lessons, pupils' behaviour is calm and purposeful. Pupils are delightfully kind and polite.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They say that it is well led and appreciate that senior leaders actively promote the well-being of everyone. They speak highly of the training they receive and know that their ideas and opinions about how to improve the school are valued, listened to and often taken up by leaders. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are committed to supporting the school and bringing about improvement.

Leaders have responded effectively to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers now have higher expectations of the standard of presentation in pupils' books, and pupils usually present their work to a high standard. Agreed approaches to ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work are applied consistently within departments.

You and your leadership team have a deep knowledge of the school and your pupils. Importantly, you know where the quality of teaching and learning is strong and where it needs to improve. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that some teaching is, indeed, very effective, such as in science, art and textiles. In these subjects, pupils are making good progress. However, you acknowledge that, at present, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies between and within subjects, including English. Pupils do not make consistently good progress in some subjects. The progress of different groups of pupils is also variable. In particular, the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who started school with below-average attainment requires some improvement. Leaders and governors know that making sure they address these aspects are important next steps.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. They have a thorough understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that they are familiar with the most recent safeguarding advice and guidance. They provide staff with regular updates in briefings and training. Consequently, staff know how to identify signs of abuse and/or report concerns to leaders. You make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The designated leaders with safeguarding responsibilities know their roles well. Inspection evidence demonstrates that leaders take swift action when concerns arise. Leaders have developed strong partnerships with several external agencies. This ensures pupils receive additional professional support when they need it.

Leaders closely monitor the attendance and progress of the very small minority of pupils who attend alternative education providers. All the correct procedures are followed when pupils leave the school to continue their education elsewhere. Leaders conduct detailed risk assessments prior to pupils taking part in school visits. The strong culture of safeguarding is an extension of the ethos of the school which is understood by pupils, staff, governors and parents.

Pupils report that there is little bullying and that, if it does occur, it is dealt with

promptly.

## **Inspection findings**

- In 2016 and 2017, published data from GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 shows that, from their starting points, pupils made strong progress in science, languages and humanities. Unvalidated 2018 examination results, along with evidence of current pupils' achievement, indicate that the school's strong performance in science is being sustained. In this subject, pupils' understanding is supported effectively by challenging work, including homework, which stretches pupils' learning. However, the unvalidated 2018 results, along with evidence of current pupils' progress including work in pupils' books, indicate that in some other subjects, including food technology, business studies and classics, pupils' progress is not consistently good.
- The quality of teaching varies between and within subjects. A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks indicates that some teaching enables pupils to make good progress. In Year 10, for example, pupils' textiles sketchbooks show pupils making rapid progress at the start of their GCSE course. In history, Year 7 pupils produce good-quality written work and show a good understanding of chronology after only a short time studying the subject. In English in key stage 4, teachers challenge pupils to develop and deepen their extended writing. Pupils are able to use adjectives well to convey mood. In some cases, teachers' skilful questioning of pupils helps some to deepen their understanding. Sometimes, however, teachers place too much emphasis on making sure that pupils complete planned activities, rather than developing their understanding. Leaders check the quality of teaching carefully and can identify where and what improvements are needed. However, their actions have not yet brought about consistently good teaching in all subjects. Addressing this is an important next step.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below average. Similarly, only a small minority of pupils start this school with below-average attainment. However, the school's own analysis of unvalidated 2018 examination results shows that these pupils did not make good enough progress in some of their chosen option subjects. Currently, these groups of pupils are not making good enough progress across the school to help them catch up quickly. Leaders acknowledge that this, in part, reflects the continuing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and staff know that improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a priority for improvement. Disadvantaged pupils receive support to enable them to access extra-curricular provision, including facilities to do their homework. However, sometimes leaders do not identify or take effective action to remove barriers to learning. Although plans to improve the achievement of this group are in place, these plans lack clarity. They are not reviewed as regularly as is needed to accelerate disadvantaged pupils' progress. Leaders are unsure if their spending of additional funding is successfully improving pupils' achievement. Governors acknowledge that there needs to be better scrutiny of this resource, both by themselves and school leaders.
- The curriculum is well enriched. Staff organise an extensive extra-curricular

programme. There is a wide range of activities in sport and performing arts, as well as clubs that include chess, debating and a diversity group. Careers education continues to be a strength of the school. In Year 11, there is an extensive programme to prepare pupils for the next phase of their education or training. Most pupils are actively engaged in this work and they speak highly of the support they receive.

- Leaders acknowledge that, in the past, the design of the curriculum has not enabled lower-attaining pupils to choose subjects that are well suited to their interests or their needs. Work to revise the curriculum so that it reflects the school's aspiration of being 'a curriculum for all' is now underway. However, this is still at an early stage of development.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment reduce so that pupils make at least good progress across all subjects, including English
- the curriculum is amended to better meet the needs of all pupils, including pupils with below-average attainment when they join the school
- the plan to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils is more precise, reviewed regularly and supports improving rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cummings  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects and in a tutorial session. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with leaders.

Inspectors met with you and senior and middle leaders. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors met with pupils from Years 9, 10 and 11 and talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaks and lunchtime about their view and experience of the school.

Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books with subject leaders of English and science. I also scrutinised a range of Year 11 books from across the curriculum

subjects with a senior leader. Inspectors 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 54 responses to the staff questionnaire, 10 responses to the pupil survey and 77 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 46 written responses.