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Mrs Joanne Tunncliffe
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Dear Mrs Tunncliffe

Short inspection of North Kesteven Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 2018 with Ofsted Inspectors Sally Wicken and Jacqueline Thornalley, 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.**

Over recent years, there has been a period of turbulence within the leadership of the school. This has slowed down the speed of improvements since the previous inspection. Since your appointment in September 2018, you have worked with other leaders to address the school's weaknesses. Leaders have acted swiftly to improve attendance and raise expectations for the behaviour of pupils. Attendance is improving in all year groups, including the sixth form. The school is calm and conducive to learning. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils.

School leaders work as a cohesive team. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in the school. You make sure that leaders at all levels are clear about their areas of responsibility and are held to account for their actions to improve the school. They share information about the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils. They thoroughly scrutinise this information to help them take incisive action to make improvements. Leaders in the sixth form have identified how they can share good practice to improve weaker teaching and meet the needs of students.

The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have only partially been dealt with due to the significant changes in leadership and some changes in staffing. Leaders were asked to improve students' achievement in the sixth form. They have introduced improved teaching strategies and encouraged teachers to set high expectations for what students can achieve. Some teachers use questioning to make students think carefully and provide them with motivating work which challenges and deepens their understanding. Teachers provide additional support that is highly effective in moving students' learning forward. Nevertheless, these strategies are not consistent across classes and subjects. In some lessons, the work is not challenging enough and expectations are too low.

Members of the school's governing body, who are also trustees, demonstrate a thorough understanding of their responsibility to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. They know about the progress of different groups of pupils, the areas for improvement and the effectiveness of school procedures. Governors have a range of relevant knowledge and skills which enable them to support and challenge the school well. They visit the school regularly to check on the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Inspectors' scrutiny of safeguarding information shows that leaders keep secure, relevant and detailed checks on staff. Leaders for safeguarding have a comprehensive understanding of the specific risks to pupils' safety in their community. They ensure that staff are well supported with relevant and up-to-date training on a variety of safeguarding topics to meet pupils' needs well. Referrals are made promptly to external agencies when further support is needed.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and always have someone to talk to if they need support. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children are kept safe at the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying do happen, but staff deal with them well.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at the quality of teaching in science. This was because outcomes for pupils in science by the end of key stage 4 declined in 2017 and 2018. Leaders have established a well-planned programme to improve the teaching of science. Leaders and staff now share good practice in regular meetings. They use external support and specialist advice from experienced colleagues to provide coaching for teachers. Leaders have established rigorous systems to collect and analyse information about the progress pupils make in science. This allows leaders to arrange extra support for pupils in danger of falling behind. However, these actions to improve the quality of teaching in science have not yet had time to demonstrate significant improvements.

- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders identified that their previous plans to improve outcomes for these pupils were not having the impact they expected. They carried out extensive research to establish a precise strategy to improve the way these pupils are taught and to ensure that pupils' social and emotional needs are met well. Where these actions have been successfully implemented, staff were able to demonstrate a positive impact. This was the case when leaders in the sixth form explained that they are now aware of the particular barriers to learning for the disadvantaged students in their care and know how to support students to overcome them. Actions to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils are focused and have seen an immediate positive improvement. However, many of the actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are still being implemented and, therefore, it is too early to evaluate the impact on the performance of these pupils.
- Improving the quality of education in the sixth form is an ongoing priority for the school. School leaders have restructured the leadership of the sixth form so that there is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the strengths and the areas in need of development in a range of subjects in the sixth form. Well-planned additional teaching and support are in place for students to help them if their progress falters. Leaders ensure that existing good practice in the sixth form and elsewhere in the school is shared well to support teachers to improve their practice.
- Teachers receive individual support from leaders or attend courses about the subjects they teach in the sixth form. This helps to support their preparation for students' external assessments.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is consistently good
- the actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science are rapidly implemented and result in improved achievement
- plans to improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils are implemented fully and their impact on the achievement of these pupils is rigorously evaluated.

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

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and the leaders for safeguarding, the sixth form, the pupil premium and other senior and middle leaders. I met with representatives from the school's governing body, including the chair of trustees.

Inspectors visited lessons, including some with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' and students' work. We discussed the progress of different groups of pupils and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the 60 responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the 38 staff responses to Ofsted's online survey. There were 108 responses to the pupils' survey.

I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, procedures and records for safeguarding and behaviour, information on how the pupil premium is spent, an analysis of attendance and a number of policy documents. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.