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Mr Philip Sanderson  
Principal  
Kings Priory School  
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Dear Mr Sanderson

### **Short inspection of Kings Priory School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2019 with Her Majesty's Inspectors Alison Aitchison and Barry Found, 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 June 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Part of your school's vision is 'to nurture individual talent, to inspire pupils to work hard and respect others as they prepare to lead a full and successful life'. You and your staff are highly effective in this regard. Pupils focus well on their studies, care for each other and are well prepared for the next stages in their education, employment or training.

You and your leadership team are passionate about Kings Priory School and are compassionate towards the pupils in your care. You are proud of your staff and your school. You know the school well and work hard to improve it. Indeed, you are successful in doing so. Your own leadership is characterised by a strong moral stance, a deep care for others, and a quiet determination. As a result, pupils are happy to be at school and your staff are proud to be part of this community.

One striking feature of your school is the high level of attainment that pupils reach at every key stage. The proportion of pupils who pass both English and mathematics at grade 4 and grade 5 by the end of key stage 4 is well above national averages. The proportion of pupils who reach the required standard in external tests in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is also well above national averages. In addition, children leave Reception very well prepared for learning in Year 1, and students leave sixth form having attained highly. Many students go on to study courses at prestigious universities. However, you are also

very aware that the progress that pupils make when they are in your school is pivotal to the quality of education on offer. Pupils make strong progress from their starting points, but you have also identified areas where they need to make even stronger progress. These findings form part of your school development plan.

Pupils are very focused in lessons and work hard at school. They know the importance of a good education. Teaching is typified by strong subject knowledge on the part of the staff, planning that is based on progression within the subject, and effective questioning in lessons. The core values of 'respect, tolerance and friendship' are explicitly noted in classrooms. The key skills of 'presenting, problem-solving and reasoning' are present in longer-term planning and within lessons. Staff are consistent in promoting these core values and key skills.

Pupils at your school typically feel safe and happy. Children in the early years develop their personal skills well and are confident and articulate. Pupils in the primary phase are polite and friendly. Pupils in the secondary phase develop well academically. Your school also helps to develop pupils' wider skills through the 'co-curricular' provision. Here, pupils have access to sport, music and outdoor activities, among other programmes, to enhance the formal curriculum. Students in the sixth form are fine ambassadors for your school and model the behaviour that you expect from all of your pupils.

Parents are engaged in school life and generally very committed to education. Indeed, 372 parents responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Comments made through the free-text option show that parents have strong opinions on the quality of education at school. Although many parents made individual suggestions on how to make your school even better, there was an overwhelming agreement that yours is a good school with many strengths. The vast majority would recommend it to parents moving into the area. The comment of one parent typified the views of many, saying, 'I feel that the staff genuinely care about my children's education and also their well-being. As a parent I feel listened to, and I would not hesitate in recommending this school to others.'

You and your team have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very strong across year groups and in different subject areas. Middle leaders are increasingly effective in bringing about improvements. For example, inspectors have confidence in those responsible for mathematics and the leader of modern languages to further improve the progress that pupils make in these subjects. Both of these subjects were areas of focus during this inspection. The academy council (the local governing body) provides effective challenge to the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and other school leaders, including members of the academy council, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that statutory checks on staff are undertaken to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Safeguarding training is recorded and monitored effectively to ensure that

all staff have up-to-date information and a secure knowledge of how to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

The way in which members of staff support pupils that are more vulnerable is strong. You have a team of staff that takes responsibility for safeguarding. This structure ensures that pupils across your two sites and six key stages are supported. The way that you track any pupils who may be in need is comprehensive. Indeed, you have added a 'well-being category' to your tracking systems so that you can identify any additional support that can be offered to pupils and their families before the need for more formal intervention. This has helped to reduce the number of referrals made to other agencies.

Pupils understand the importance of attending school. Few are persistently absent. Pupils behave well at school and are courteous and polite. They treat each other with respect. Pupils say that there is little bullying and that they feel safe. If anyone uses unkind words, or acts disrespectfully towards someone, pupils have confidence that members of staff will help to sort the situation out. Pupils understand what it is to be a citizen in modern Britain and understand the values of tolerance, democracy and respect.

Pastoral care is at the heart of your school. A variety of opportunities are used to develop pupils' character, wider skills and relationships with each other. Assemblies, chapel, and tutor time are on offer to pupils to this end. In addition, pupils work together in 'chapters' so that they join with those from other year groups for team events and charity work. School policies, staff training, the respectful school community, and curriculum coverage all help to ensure that pupils are safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- As part of the inspection, I wanted to look at the quality of education in the primary phase of the school. Yours is an all-through school, teaching children from early years through to students in the sixth form. Your vision for the school is that your 'distinctive first, middle and senior schools work closely together to maximize the benefits of being all-through'. As such, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are placed in the 'middle school'. Inspectors found that leaders with responsibility for primary-aged pupils know where provision is strong and also know where further focus is needed. There is an increasing level of consistency in the quality of education on offer between classrooms and between year groups in the primary phase.
- An example of the way in which your team have improved provision is the way in which mathematics is taught in Years 5 and 6. Here, pupils were previously taught by secondary specialists rather than their class teacher. You noted that, for your school, this was not having the desired impact of further improving the rate of pupils' progress. You changed the way in which mathematics was delivered and monitored this to ensure that provision was improving. As a result, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are now making stronger progress in this subject.
- Inspectors confirm your own self-evaluation of the quality of provision in key

stage 2. Current pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from exercise books confirms this.

- I wanted to find out how well your school provides for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The system in place to help to identify the individual needs of pupils with SEND is robust. In addition, the information that teachers have as to the individual needs of pupils, together with possible strategies that can be used to support them, is strong. Several teachers use this information effectively to help pupils with SEND make gains in their learning. However, inspection evidence confirms that teachers are not all consistently effective in meeting these pupils' needs.
- The 'learning loft' is a supportive environment for pupils who may feel more vulnerable, and for those with SEND. Here, pupils can benefit from additional interventions or spend time at breaktime or lunchtime socialising in a supportive environment. Pupils that struggle to focus or need support to behave appropriately can reflect upon their actions in the 'prepare for learning' room within the 'learning loft'. One of the impacts of this additional support is an improvement in behaviour for some pupils. Restorative approaches and a focus on de-escalation techniques have led to a decrease in the number of pupils who have had a fixed-term exclusion from school. There has also been a decrease in the proportion of pupils with SEND who have been subject to a fixed-term exclusion. This decrease is as a result of increasingly effective support for the behavioural needs of some of these pupils.
- Another area of focus during the inspection was the rate of progress that pupils make at key stage 4. Standards of attainment are high throughout the school, and the proportion of pupils who take the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (English, mathematics, science, a modern or ancient language, and either history or geography) is well above the national average. Published data for rates of pupils' progress in mathematics and in modern languages was less strong in 2018.
- The progress that pupils make in mathematics is improving. The standards that they reach are high. Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is strong. Teachers plan lessons that build upon what pupils know and their questioning pushes pupils on in their learning effectively. Inspectors judge that there are still improvements to make in this subject area in order that pupils make even stronger progress from their starting points. This is reflected in your development plan.
- The progress that pupils are currently making in modern languages is now strong. You described some turbulence in staffing in this area of the curriculum, and students in the sixth form confirmed that teaching was negatively affected by staffing issues in the past. Nonetheless, I can confirm that the current provision in modern languages is impressive. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve in this subject. They focus on developing a level of complexity in linguistic output on the part of the pupils, and in their ability to manipulate grammatical structures. The level of work that I saw being produced by pupils in Year 5 Spanish was very high. Pupils can see the improvements in the quality of provision. A greater number are planning to study

modern languages in the sixth form, and a high proportion of sixth-form students studying French or Spanish want to continue these subjects at university. As a result of historical turbulence, some teachers need to continue to address gaps in pupils' knowledge, specifically in key stage 4.

- You describe your curriculum as balancing 'academic achievement with an enrichment programme that embraces specialisms in outdoor learning, sporting achievement and music'. Pupils were able to describe to inspectors the wide range of additional opportunities that are available to them, including sports, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and a wide variety of musical enrichments. Inspectors saw first-hand the high quality of art being produced in GCSE lessons. Your focus on additional opportunities, or 'co-curricular provision', in this way is having a positive impact on developing pupils' wider experience of education.
- My final line of questioning was around the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. I find that you and your team are self-critical and want the best for the pupils in your care. This is the case for children in early years and students in the sixth form also. You know that there are strengths at your school, but you want your pupils' experience to be even better. As a member of staff said to me, 'we all work together to make this the best school that it can be'. Your incisive school improvement documents mirror this. The systems in place to assure the quality of education are fit for purpose. Your management of progress data is comprehensive. Everyone is working to make the school even better for the benefit of the pupils in your care.
- Although not a focus of this inspection, I note that the progress that pupils make in English is particularly strong at your school. Here, teachers ensure that pupils build on their prior knowledge well and make strides in their learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress that pupils make in mathematics continues to improve
- the information available to members of staff to support pupils with SEND is used both consistently and effectively
- teachers continue to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge in modern languages at key stage 4 to ensure that they reach the standards of which they are capable.

I am copying this letter to the 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 North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and members of your senior team. I spoke with two members of the academy council, including the chair. I also spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust. Inspectors met with middle leaders from both the primary and secondary phases, including those responsible for English, mathematics and modern languages. An inspector talked to those with responsibility for safeguarding.

Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the day and talked to others across the course of the inspection. We observed teaching and learning with members of the senior team, and reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and from a variety of subjects, including that from children in early years and students in the sixth form. Inspectors talked to two groups of pupils, and one group of sixth-form students. You presented the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document and information detailing pupils' progress and attainment. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website.

I considered the 65 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 231 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I looked at the 372 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, in addition to the free-text comments.

This inspection particularly focused on a number of key questions:

How strong is the quality of education on offer in the primary phase?

How well are pupils with SEND served and how strong is the progress that they make?

Have the rates of progress that pupils make at key stage 4 improved, particularly in mathematics?

How strong is the quality of teaching in modern languages?

How incisive is the self-evaluation of the school and how well do school leaders know the strengths and areas for development of the school?

To what extent are vulnerable pupils being supported, and to what extent are they kept safe?