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23 May 2019

Ms Sarah Wilson  
Headteacher  
Joseph Norton Academy  
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Dear Ms Wilson

### **Short inspection of Joseph Norton Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 9 April 2019 with David Penny, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2013.

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

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

Since the predecessor school's last inspection, you have brought about improvement in many areas of the school. These include safeguarding and behaviour procedures, the curriculum and methods used to check pupils' progress. You and your senior leaders are passionate about educating pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and have a clear vision for the school, which is understood and supported by staff. This, combined with the support of your governing body and the multi-academy trust, ensures that the school is moving forward and has the capacity for continued improvement.

The school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness and plans for improvement are clear and appropriate. For example, the introduction of an effective strategy to improve attendance in 2016/17 has resulted in an increase, which brings the overall attendance this year to be in line with the national average.

At the time of the predecessor school's last inspection, opportunities were being missed to allow pupils to develop and practise their writing skills. You have ensured that developments in the curriculum have included a whole school focus on reading and writing. The newly developed curriculum is more focussed on individual pupil's social, emotional and mental health needs. This enables pupils to be prepared and ready to learn. As a result, most pupils are making strong progress against their

individual targets, particularly in English.

The school's behaviour management systems are effective in managing pupils' behaviour. Records of negative incidents are documented in detail and analysis is carried out which enables leaders to develop action plans for individual pupils. These action plans support staff and pupils to manage pupils' difficult behaviour through a combination of independent work, time out of the classroom, rewards and sanctions. Examples of the effectiveness of this could be seen during the inspection. For example, pupils in crisis were seen leaving classrooms to work elsewhere with a member of staff, while others stayed in the classroom and were re-engaged with their work. However, the school's management of inappropriate language used by pupils was less successful at times. In a small number of classrooms pupils showed too little respect for themselves, their peers and other adults.

Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to prepare them for life after school. Vocational subjects, such as hospitality and farming, feed into work experience opportunities and prepare pupils for entry into further education. All pupils who leave Year 11 move onto further education or apprenticeships. However, leaders are clear about the challenges facing their pupils as they enter mainstream colleges, leaving behind the very supportive nature of the school. You have implemented a system to track pupils through Year 12, with a view to further supporting those who are struggling in further education.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and detailed records kept. The designated safeguarding leads (DSL) are knowledgeable both in relation to safeguarding training and the needs of pupils who attend the school. The DSL and the pastoral support team work effectively to support and manage pupils who have complex issues and report these to the appropriate authorities when necessary.

The wider staff team receive a full and comprehensive safeguarding training programme which covers a range of subjects including neglect and abuse, child sexual exploitation and gang violence. This enables them to be vigilant for any potential danger signs. They are confident in their understanding of the safeguarding policy and procedures of the school and know how to record any concerns effectively.

Staff say, and parents and carers who made their views known agreed, that pupils are safe in the school. One parent commented that 'safeguarding is of the highest order'. Through the wider curriculum you ensure that there are ongoing opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils have taken part in e-safety workshops, which supports them to stay safe online.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we looked at whether the quality of teaching remains good and leads to pupils making good progress. Your current curriculum and subsequent staff training have helped to ensure that teachers plan learning tasks effectively. These tasks support the needs of individual pupils and enable them to access the academic education on offer.
- Pupils are making good progress, especially in English. Work in pupils' exercise books, particularly in key stage 2, is of a high quality and pupils can be seen building on prior learning to develop skills in handwriting and sentence construction. In key stage 3 pupils' progress is evident in the work completed in mathematics books, particularly in the application of number. Pupils are less aware of the topics they are studying in science and cannot always articulate what they need to do to progress to the next stage of their learning. The further training currently being undertaken with the teaching staff is beginning to improve pupils' understanding and application to work in key stage 4.
- Parents spoken to and those who filled in the Ofsted online Parent View survey agree that their children are making progress both academically and socially as a result of their placement at the school. They are appreciative of the learning journal which they receive each week. The learning journal includes comments from staff, photographs detailing what their child has studied and any progress made over the previous week.
- Reading is an embedded culture within the school. Pupils are encouraged to read both independently and with an adult, using a range of resources including reading books and computer programmes designed to support the identified need of individual pupils. Key stage 4 pupils are encouraged to share their favourite books with their peers, writing book reviews designed to entice others to read.
- Hospitality lessons and work on the farm showcase the school's real-life approach towards learning. Pupils take part in planning the lunches for all pupils, practising before cooking and serving their peers. Staff and pupils are proud of this service and pupils spoken to during the lunch period felt they had input into the menus and were complimentary towards the pupils who had cooked.
- Leaders ensure that, when pupils join the school, their skills and knowledge are accurately assessed, along with the targets from their individual education, health and care (EHC) plans. From this starting point, social progress and learning is planned. Each pupil's social progress is measured effectively through the school's assessment system and against the targets within their EHC plan. The school's own assessment shows that all pupils make progress against their social and EHC plan targets. However, not all staff can describe the progress pupils are making in their learning. Consequently, teachers do not use progress information as well as they could to plan pupils' next steps.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' behaviour and attendance. Across the school, the management of inappropriate language is inconsistent. Where pupils are engaged with learning, their behaviour and use of language is positive. These pupils showed respect to themselves, their peers and adults. In some classes a small number of pupils' behaviour was more variable. There was increased use of

derogatory language towards their peers, staff and visitors. In the main, this was quickly dealt with by the staff.

- Most pupils attend school regularly. A small number of pupils are educated on a one-to-one basis within a community setting or in the school's own mobile classroom. These pupils have full-time, bespoke timetables which meet their specific needs. These pupils attend well and make considerable progress towards their social and academic targets. The plan for most of these pupils is to reintegrate them back into school; however, for a small number this bespoke offer is indefinite.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work with pupils on their use of inappropriate and derogatory language continues and develops, with a view to rapidly reducing the use of such language in lessons
- the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress continue to develop to ensure that all staff can articulate the progress made by their pupils and that they use this information to plan for the next steps in pupils' learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Tricia Stevens  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. Meetings were held with members of the academy trust, governors, the local authority learning partner, a group of pupils and five parents. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed the arrival, lunch and dismissal of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's evaluation of its own performance, Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff, pupils' learning journals and the records of checks made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils.