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5 June 2019

Ms Marion Budd  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Budd

### **Short inspection of Northolt High School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019 with Heidi Swidenbank, Her Majesty's 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 July 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have worked well together to create the inclusive and celebratory culture evident throughout the school; the values of 'pride, respect and courage' are promoted well and shared by all. The inclusive school community is underpinned by strong pastoral care and safeguarding of pupils' welfare. You provide strong leadership and, supported by the senior leadership team, you are continuing to make improvements.

Pupils speak positively about school life. They are happy, feel safe and are keen to learn. They behave well around the school, showing respect for staff, pupils and visitors alike. Pupils look smart in their school uniform. They said that they value the support that they receive from staff.

You, senior leaders and governors have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and have an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and areas to develop. Since the previous inspection attendance has improved. Pupils attend regularly. Overall, pupils' attendance and the rates of persistent absenteeism are in line with the national averages. The previous inspection report also highlighted the need for a more consistent focus on literacy across the school. You have implemented a strong focus on reading and have promoted improvements to pupils' reading and writing skills.

Following the dip in GCSE examination results last year you took swift action to analyse and address the issues that you identified. Most pupils now make good progress across a wide range of subjects. They have positive attitudes to work. Nevertheless, the progress of most-able pupils is inconsistent. This is because,

despite improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, the work they are set is often insufficiently demanding.

Governors provide you and other leaders with strong challenge and support. They are well informed and examine information provided to them thoroughly so that the most pertinent questions can be asked. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's many strengths, but also a candid understanding of those areas needing improvement. Governors are skilled and take a reflective approach to their roles. Like you, they care deeply about the school and the community it serves.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. These arrangements combine to create a culture of safeguarding throughout the school. The required checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are undertaken accurately and recorded clearly.

Staff are well trained, monitor pupils' welfare closely and understand how to report concerns. Governors are clear about their responsibilities for safeguarding and bring valuable experience that they use to hold leaders to account.

Pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, and also those who spoke to inspectors, said that they feel safe in school. They understand the different forms of bullying that can take place. Pupils are confident that, on the rare occasions that bullying may happen, if they speak to an adult it will be dealt with. Leaders work with a range of agencies to help to keep pupils safe and ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

### **Inspection findings**

- We focused on the progress of pupils working towards GCSE examinations. This was because the progress made by last year's cohort fell substantially in a range of subjects including mathematics, science and humanities. Previously, pupils made progress in line with others nationally.
- Following the downturn in GCSE examination results in 2018, leaders acted quickly to identify issues and implement a range of strategies to ensure that the progress of current pupils is good. Effective staff development and training, new subject leaders and raised expectations have all contributed to improved provision.
- As a result, the progress of current pupils across year groups is good. The quality of work in pupils' books shows the results of good teaching over time and supports the assessment information provided by the school. This shows that pupils now make more secure progress across a range of subject areas. Teachers have high expectations of pupils; pupils rise to this challenge and take pride in their work. Work seen in mathematics, science and history books shows that pupils now make good progress over time.
- Although teachers have received high-quality training aimed at improving

teaching, learning and assessment, the school's work to provide consistent challenge for the most able pupils is not yet embedded. As a consequence, their progress is more variable, particularly where their needs are not being met in classes that contain pupils with a wide range of prior attainment.

- Secondly, we focused on disadvantaged pupils, who have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations.
- As a result of the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and leaders' effective use of the pupil premium funding, the quality and presentation of disadvantaged pupils' work are now comparable to the work of their peers. Inspectors observed disadvantaged pupils of different abilities participating in class discussion and engaging in their learning. The work in books showed that they are keen to act on the advice of their teachers and improve their work. However, leaders acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure that their progress matches that of other pupils nationally.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now in line with the national average. This is due to leaders' use of the pupil premium funding to implement strategies that increase disadvantaged pupils' engagement with school and boost their achievement. Leaders track attendance closely, analyse trends and work effectively with families.
- Finally, we looked at the school's use of exclusions as, over time, the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed term has been higher than the national average.
- You have brought about improvements to behaviour by the introduction of the 'Northolt Way' and an effective rewards system. 'Fabulous Friday' which rewards pupils' work and attitude is highly valued by pupils. The 'Northolt Way' incorporating the values of pride, respect and courage are well embedded into the school's culture. Pupils are well mannered. The environment around the school and in lessons is calm and orderly. There are infrequent occasions when pupils do not behave in line with expectations. These incidents are dealt with in a timely and effective manner, so that interruption to learning is minimised. Consequently, the proportion of pupils that are excluded for a fixed term is reducing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes
- teachers consistently challenge the most able, particularly in mixed-ability classes
- the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed-term period reduces further.

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

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Dickinson

## **Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. They also spoke with groups of pupils.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and governors' minutes. Information relating to pupils' attendance, progress, exclusion and pupil premium funding was also considered. Additionally, inspectors scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online survey, the 35 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and the 68 responses to the pupil survey.