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23 October 2019

Mr M Scott  
Headteacher  
Newport Girls' High School Academy  
Wellington Road  
Newport  
Shropshire  
TF10 7HL

Dear Mr Scott

### **No formal designation inspection of Newport Girls' High School Academy**

Following my visit with Mr Michael Onyon and Mr Mark Feldman, Ofsted inspectors, to your school on 15 October 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the quality of education.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other safeguarding documents and met with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding leader, the chair of the governing body and another member of the governing body. Inspectors met with faculty and subject leaders to discuss the curriculum and visit lessons with these leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning and how they are taught to keep themselves safe. Meetings were held with teachers to discuss teaching, learning, workload and their well-being. Inspectors spoke to pupils at break and lunchtime and observed a range of lunchtime activities. They considered 42 responses to Parent View.

### **Context**

Newport Girls' High School Academy is a girls' grammar school with 576 pupils on roll. There are very low proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals or with special educational needs (SEND). Very few pupils join and leave the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year. Staff turnover is low. The school was judged to be outstanding at its previous inspection in 2007. Since then, the school has had a new headteacher and a new chair of governors.

Pupils at Newport Girls' High School Academy experience a rich, rewarding and successful education. They love to learn, and grasp every opportunity to develop their talents and interests in lessons and beyond. It is clear that, at this school, pupils' academic and personal achievements are equally valued. As a result, they achieve exceptionally well at GCSE and A level and are happy, safe and fulfilled.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is adapted to suit the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those with SEND. Throughout the school, teachers use their impressive subject knowledge to probe pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions quickly. They share assessment criteria with pupils and give clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Pupils have a firm understanding of what they are expected to learn in each subject. Pupils regularly evaluate their own and others' performance. This is now a consistent approach to assessment across all subjects, which has improved outcomes further.

Standards at the end of key stage 4 in all subjects have been consistently well above national averages for a number of years. A much higher proportion of pupils are entered for the EBacc than is typical nationally. By the end of key stage 4, pupils' progress has typically been stronger in some subjects than others. For example, pupils have not made as much progress in chemistry as they have in English and mathematics. Leaders have taken steps to address this. Pupils now study their chosen GCSE subjects from the beginning of Year 9. Leaders' intention is that pupils have more time to consolidate and practise their skills. This has proven to be the case. Pupils engage in lively discussions, for example in English, where pupils demonstrated a deep understanding of the background to the texts they were studying. For these pupils, in this context, the extra time to deepen their learning helps to relieve the pressure many of them experience during the exam period. Standards at key stage 4 in many subjects have improved as a result of this curriculum strategy.

Pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects up to the end of Year 8. Leaders explained that, given the high ability of their pupils, and their excellent work ethic, it is appropriate to cover the whole of the key stage 3 curriculum in two years. Leaders demonstrated clearly that by the end of Year 8, subjects had been studied both broadly and in depth, preparing pupils exceptionally well for the next steps in their education. Pupils still receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum to the end of Year 9, however.

They study 10 GCSE subjects in Year 9, including some that they choose for themselves, and they can reduce the number of subjects by one at the end of the year if they wish. Through the extensive offer of high-quality extra-curricular activities, all pupils engage fully in artistic, creative and cultural learning, even if they do not choose creative GCSE subjects.

In the sixth form, students are focused, hard-working and dedicated to their studies. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced to ensure that students grasp new

and complex concepts very quickly. For example, in psychology, after only a few weeks of studying the subject, Year 12 students clearly explained their understanding of important psychological theories. The school's approach to teaching academic writing is a real strength. Students talk knowledgably about how they can improve their writing by improving the register of their language. Students develop independence through extended projects which prepares them well for the next stage of their education or training. Students' attainment at A level is well above the national average in most subjects. However, students' progress is not strong in some subjects when compared with the progress made by other pupils nationally. This is because, with such strong GCSE outcomes, the projections of students' attainment by the end of key stage 5 are extremely high. All students go on to positive education and training destinations at the end of Year 13. The large majority of students secure places at their first choice of university. A small number of students accept unconditional offers from universities. Sometimes these students then do less well than the school believes they should. Leaders believe these unconditional offers may act as a disincentive for some students to achieve the best possible grades at A level.

Faculty leaders provide strong leadership to support teachers in their departments. Teachers' subject knowledge is impressive. They value the professional dialogue they have with colleagues. Any new developments are rooted in academic research about what works. There is a real buzz across the school about learning, the curriculum and the best ways to teach. Teachers work together to enhance provision across the school by reviewing specific aspects of their work. All staff are involved in professional learning groups. One example of this is the recently-revised feedback and marking policy. A group of teachers volunteered to review the existing policy. The revised policy now better addresses the needs of pupils and has reduced teachers' workload. Pupils receive high-quality feedback from teachers. They have time to digest this and reflect on their progress. They know what they need to do to improve their work and they act on teachers' advice enthusiastically. They also review their own and other pupils' work regularly. As a result, pupils make strong progress and teachers feel empowered and well supported.

Leaders and governors are alert to any potential risks to teachers' work life balance. The well-being charter encourages staff to find ways to look after their own mental and physical health. Leaders understand that this is a crucial issue for the pupils too. Specially-trained pupils, who are members of the well-being group, run confidential drop-in sessions every Monday lunchtime for anyone who feels anxious. Pupils' behaviour is consistently exemplary. Pupils show humility and respect to each other and to adults. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were not aware of any bullying incidents. They know that there is always someone they can talk to if they need to. One pupil's view was representative of many when she said, 'Everyone gets on here. It's like a family.'

Life outside lessons is busy and exciting. There is an extensive range of curricular enrichment opportunities on offer. Many take place at lunchtime, so that all pupils

can attend, even if they live a long distance from the school or have other after-school commitments. The lunchtime activities are varied and include sports, gardening, literary society and Japanese club. Pupils are all encouraged to take part in at least one activity and some take part in many. All pupils take part in sports day and at least one house event each year. Some activities are run by staff, but others are led by older pupils for the benefit of younger pupils. On the day of the inspection, 49 pupils were rehearsing, led solely by sixth formers, for a house choir event. The standard was excellent, and the pupils' enjoyment was obvious. In an art club run by an older pupil for Year 7 pupils, there was a lovely atmosphere with lots of fun and good-quality art was being produced. Some older pupils mentor younger pupils and provide tutoring in subject-specific drop-in sessions.

There are many trips and visits linked to the curriculum throughout the year, including local destinations and others across the world. Pupils can take part in these opportunities even if they are not studying the relevant subject. For example, pupils who were not studying geography were still able to join a field trip to Iceland. All pupils participate in a curriculum enrichment week in the summer term. Many pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award each year. The school is a champion school for the National Citizen Service. These opportunities demonstrate the school's commitment to pupils' wider development.

### **External support**

Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the school is open to new ideas and continuously improving. He has built a strong culture of sharing professional practice in school. The school now works much more closely with other schools to share best practice. Teachers value the opportunities they have to work with others to develop their practice further.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**