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Mr Andrew Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of Springwood High School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2017 with John Wilson, 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils learn within a calm, orderly environment and enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and with each other. They speak articulately and with confidence, wear their uniform with pride, and treat the school site with respect. Leaders and teachers emphasise the importance of academic achievement; pupils respond to these high expectations by working diligently – often with evident enthusiasm. Pupils participate readily in a wide range of activities that promote their personal development and help to create a vibrant community that they are proud to be a part of. Leaders and governors are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils access the same opportunities to develop their interests and skills as other pupils enjoy. This determination to ensure 'opportunity for all' helps develop pupils' aspirations and confidence, as well as their ability to take the next steps in education or employment when they leave the school.

You and your senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; you are working effectively as a team to drive forward the necessary improvements. Difficult decisions are made when leadership, or teaching, is not good enough. You and other senior leaders have provided effective support to recently appointed subject leaders in English, mathematics and science. This – together with well-targeted training for all teachers – has helped to reverse a dip in pupils' progress and outcomes at key stage 4. An ongoing and rigorous analysis of

how far actions are having the intended impact helps you to determine what works well and what needs to be done differently. Accordingly, you have made changes that have ensured that pupils are typically challenged to think hard within lessons, and to complete work that, as one pupil put it, is 'hard, but not too hard'. Leaders have changed the nature of homework tasks so that these often involve pupils answering a complex question, solving a problem or completing focused research. Teachers' regular and precise feedback, following the school's policy, makes clear to pupils how they can improve their work, particularly at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils appreciate this guidance and the time they are given to make the changes. However, the school's own monitoring indicates that sometimes it is less clear to key stage 3 pupils how to improve their work because feedback is not specific enough about what they need to do next.

You have also taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching that disadvantaged pupils receive, following the poor performance of some of these pupils in the 2016 GCSE examinations. Leaders and governors have based their actions upon research evidence about 'what works', as well as a secure analysis of the impact of different approaches at Springwood. Your monitoring information, together with scrutiny of pupils' work during this inspection, indicates that the difference between the progress current disadvantaged pupils are making compared to that of others from the same starting points is diminishing. In the past, some disadvantaged pupils have not done as well as they might in public examinations because their attendance has been too low. It is clear that disadvantaged pupils' attendance is rising overall and that the strategies leaders are using are helping to reduce the persistent absence of individual pupils, in many cases significantly. However, the attendance of both this group and of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who also have an education, health and care plan is not yet in line with the national average.

Leaders have made significant and substantial improvements to the quality of education provided in the school's large sixth form. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors found that the quality of teaching in the sixth form was too variable and that leaders did not check the quality of provision in different subjects rigorously enough. Systems to monitor the impact of teaching and assessment in the sixth form are now secure. Students typically make more progress than might be expected given their starting points and they achieve well. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the life of the school through their involvement in a wide range of activities, including mentoring and volunteering. These and other activities, together with expert guidance, help to prepare them well for higher education, employment or training, including higher-level apprenticeships.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding within the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school site is safe and secure. The overwhelming majority of parents believe that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils feel safe and able to raise any concerns they might have with staff. Pupils are

confident that unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, is rare and dealt with effectively when it does occur. The curriculum helps them to understand and manage risks, such as those involving the use of social networking sites. Staff are swift in identifying and acting upon any concerns that they have about individuals; the school's full-time safeguarding officer works particularly effectively with external agencies so that pupils get the help that they need quickly.

Inspection findings

- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who have an education, health and care plan, having declined since the last inspection, was one of my key lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good. Leaders are using their detailed knowledge of the circumstances of individual pupils who attend too infrequently to work effectively with their parents, and where appropriate, external agencies. It is evident that these strategies are helping to improve the attendance of individual pupils – in many cases dramatically. Overall, the rate of persistent absence for both of these groups of pupils has declined markedly since the start of the current academic year. However, it remains above the national average.
- At the previous inspection, inspectors found that too often pupils completed work that lacked challenge and that they were not given time to think deeply or explore ideas at a high level. Leaders have acted to ensure that pupils complete appropriately challenging work. Pupils think deeply in class because teachers ask them questions that encourage them to extend their thinking, make connections, unravel misconceptions and consider the perspectives of others. Less-able pupils can move forward quickly once they have mastered the basics without, as one pupil noted, 'always just being left to do the easy work'. As a result of these changes, the most able pupils make more than the expected amount of progress in many subjects and achieve highly. Feedback at key stage 4 and in the sixth form typically challenges pupils to do better by giving them specific guidance about what they need to improve. Sometimes feedback provides key stage 3 pupils with less challenge, because it lacks subject-specific precision about how they might do better.
- Since the previous inspection, disadvantaged pupils have often made less progress, and enjoyed less positive outcomes, than other pupils with similar starting points nationally. Evidence from my next line of enquiry relating to this indicates that these differences are now diminishing. Leaders have ensured that in key subjects, including English and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are taught by the school's most effective teachers. Teachers and subject leaders are monitoring the progress of these pupils carefully, and using this information to plan activities that enable them to take the next steps in their learning. A recently appointed leader is working well to provide additional opportunities and support for disadvantaged pupils, to help individuals to overcome barriers to their learning, and to hold subject leaders accountable for the progress they make. This has ensured that these pupils' needs remain in sharp and constant focus, but it is too early to fully determine the impact of some of these recently

introduced strategies.

- At the previous inspection, inspectors found too much variation in the quality of teaching in the sixth form and its impact on students' progress and outcomes. Students did not always make enough progress and achieve as well as they could. Consequently, this was a further line of enquiry. Leaders provide expert advice and guidance that helps students to choose courses that are a good match for their interests, ambitions and abilities. Checks upon the quality of teaching and the impact that it has on students' progress are regular, and leaders have taken effective action when standards have not been high enough within particular subject areas. Teachers monitor the progress of individuals carefully, and help to get students back on track if regular 'progress checks' indicate that they are in danger of falling behind. Students develop their ideas well, and make connections between different aspects of their subjects, because of the variety of techniques teachers use to promote high-level thinking, discussion and debate. Students are able to convey their ideas and arguments well when completing essays and other pieces of extended writing, because teachers show them how to structure those responses effectively. Because of these improvements, students make good or better progress in the majority of their subjects and typically gain the grades that they need to reach their chosen destinations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by an education, health and care plan decreases, and that the attendance of these groups of pupils continues to increase, so that it is at least in line with the national average for all pupils
- the impact of recently introduced strategies to remove disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning is evaluated carefully, so that the most successful approaches are used to diminish the difference between the rate of progress for these pupils and that of other pupils
- all teachers provide precise, subject-specific feedback to key stage 3 pupils, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy, so that pupils are challenged to improve their work and understand how they can do so.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other members of your leadership team, representatives of the West Norfolk Academies Trust, members of the governing body and colleagues responsible for safeguarding to discuss progress since the previous inspection, and how pupils are kept safe and secure. Inspectors met with teachers and subject leaders to discuss outcomes for pupils and the impact of decisions leaders have made. Inspectors scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. Inspectors undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books, spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons, and held meetings with pupils in key stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. Inspectors analysed 132 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, along with other information about parental perspectives.