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Mr Peter Holyk
Principal
Nottingham Girls' Academy
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Dear Mr Holyk

Short inspection of Nottingham Girls' Academy

Following my visit to the school on 3 November 2016 with Christine Staley, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education at the school since the last inspection. The school is a cohesive and inclusive community, characterised by harmonious relationships among the very diverse range of groups of pupils represented. The pupils and the students in the sixth form feel nurtured, socially and academically, and grow to be reflective, confident, determined, self-managing and well-adjusted young people.

The school's values run through its work like the proverbial letters through a stick of seaside rock. You set the tone and the staff turn the values into action. The result is close relationships between the pupils and between the pupils and the staff. The staff know individual pupils well. They enable the pupils to gain a clear understanding of their personal achievements, which helps to build the pupils' self-respect and confidence, by providing carefully tailored and effective support to them.

The school does some things particularly well. The pupils with whom we spoke gave a genuine sense that people at the school care for and about each other. Some of the pupils need a lot of support, emotionally, with their behaviour, and with their learning. They receive the support and told us themselves that they think that you and the staff 'go the extra mile' on their behalf.

You have dealt with the areas for improvement from the last inspection well. You have made important improvements to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. In particular, the systematic approach that you have adopted to promoting fundamental British values, which covers both the main school and the sixth form, contributes significantly to the positive attitudes to learning and to life expressed by the pupils with whom we met. Subject leaders play a more significant part now in improving the school than they did at the time of the last inspection.

The pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection. The pupils make good progress overall, including disadvantaged pupils, who are now catching up with other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils do not make quite as much progress, however, as other pupils at the school. The students' achievement in the sixth form is not as strong as it is in the main school and variations between subjects and types of courses are more evident.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. The staff are trained in, and kept up to date with, safeguarding matters. They understand the school's procedures for reporting any concerns and do so promptly, when necessary.

The school provides high levels of personalised care and support for individual pupils who may be experiencing significant difficulties both in and out of school. The action that you take is effective. It helps the pupils to deal with difficulties and to take part fully in their education. In some cases, it results in significant improvements in attitudes and behaviour.

You and your team work well with external agencies, for example local authority services for children potentially missing from education (this is particularly important, given the relatively high proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school at unusual times). The staff responsible for attendance are persistent and effective in following up any absences.

The well-kept, well-respected and secure site contributes to the pupils feeling safe at the school. The pupils are confident that any issues that arise are dealt with quickly by the staff, including the rare examples of bullying, or use of racist language. Their confidence is testament to the close relationships that underpin the work of the school.

The pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of risks, for example in the use of social media and through texting, and express sensible views about dealing with such things.

Inspection findings

- Leaders at all levels in the school demonstrate ambition to improve and pursue their work with a strong sense of purpose. That invests the school with a sense of coherence and drive. It has led to some notable improvements at the school since the last inspection.
- As a result of the improvements, the multi-academy trust, of which the school is a part, is able increasingly to draw upon the school as a resource for supporting other schools.
- The range of options provided in the sixth form has been designed effectively to meet the needs of the students.
- The students have been guided well in making their choices, so that they are on appropriate courses.
- The effective programme of careers education in the sixth form contributes to the students' high aspirations. In each of the last three years, all of the students have gone on to appropriate further study or training after leaving the sixth form. This is something on which you keep a close eye.
- The school's thorough approach to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students gives them a good awareness of social and political issues and helps to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The leaders in the sixth form have an accurate and astute understanding of the areas of strength and relative weaknesses.
- The leaders know that the sixth-form students do not do equally well in all of the different subjects and on all of the different courses offered. The progress of the students on vocational courses is very good, but more varied in academic subjects.
- You have provided the subject leaders with useful opportunities for professional development that have improved their knowledge, skills and understanding of their roles. Those opportunities have led to practical improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The very significant improvement in the pupils' progress in English in 2015 is particularly noteworthy.
- The inspectors witnessed consistently positive attitudes to, and behaviour for, learning among the pupils, both in the main school and in the sixth form. This does not mean that all of the pupils are always on their best behaviour, but the school is successful in dealing with misbehaviour, when it occurs.
- The pupils concentrate well in lessons. They respond promptly to instructions from the staff. Consistently, the work that they produce shows care and a sense of pride.
- The subject leaders, increasingly, use information about the pupils' learning to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. That is not done quite so well in relation to sixth-form courses.
- The subject leaders make sure that classroom teachers are aware of which of their pupils are disadvantaged.

- The teachers monitor carefully how well the disadvantaged pupils, some of whom face very significant barriers to learning, are doing in lessons and provide well-judged help, often subtly, which helps the pupils to make progress.
- Over time, however, the disadvantaged pupils do not make quite as much progress as other pupils at the school.
- The disadvantaged pupils are helped effectively to improve their reading skills. The pupils who find reading difficult make good gains, particularly as a result of additional support that they are given.
- The pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. The most able are enabled to make rapid progress because the school identifies swiftly when they are ready to move on to higher level work.
- The pupils develop a strong interest in reading. The school's library is a popular resource.
- The pupils' attendance has improved well. It is now above average.
- Attendance in the sixth form has also improved, but is lower than in the main school.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved to a greater extent than that of other pupils. The difference has reduced noticeably and these pupils' attendance is currently above average, although overall, disadvantaged pupils still do not attend as well as others.
- You have reduced the level of exclusions at the school significantly in the last year. No pupils have been excluded permanently for two years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining differences between the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils are reduced
- the remaining variations between students' progress on different courses in the sixth form are reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with: the principal and with other senior leaders; subject leaders; the leader responsible for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the leader responsible for the sixth form; designated persons for safeguarding; staff responsible for attendance; and with representatives of the governing body. They met with representatives of the multi-academy trust of which the school is a part, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the school's local advisory council, who is also a representative of the multi-academy trust. They made a series of visits to lessons jointly with the principal and other senior leaders, including in the sixth form. They talked with pupils about their reading. They met with groups of pupils to discuss the work of the school and talked with them also in lessons and informally during breaks. They looked at the views of parents expressed using Parent View, and others collected through surveys carried out by the school, and at the results of inspection surveys of the pupils and the staff. They looked at a range of documents, including records of support provided to the pupils, safeguarding records, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, a range of policy documents, and other information about behaviour and attendance. The inspectors looked into the effectiveness of the sixth form compared with that of the main school, the impact of support provided for disadvantaged pupils, the effectiveness of the school's work to improve the leadership of subjects, and the effectiveness of the school's work to safeguard pupils. The information on the school's website complies with the requirements set out in its academy funding agreement.