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12 October 2017

Mr Phil Loftus
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Loftus

Short inspection of Norton College

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2017 with John McNally, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have firmly embedded your culture of 'aspire', where pupils are clear about your expectations for them to achieve, develop as an individual and achieve their full potential.

Following the previous inspection, you and your leadership team have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Your highly effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching ensure that there is no complacency and that all staff take part in appropriate professional development to keep standards high. Science is improving and pupils are developing more skills to take control of their learning. You have restructured middle leadership to ensure strong leadership in each department or faculty, while ensuring that leaders have the skills to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They tolerate and respect differences and bullying is very rare. They are happy that in lessons teachers manage behaviour well, most of the time, so that they can learn without disruption. Behaviour outside lessons, in some areas, can occasionally be boisterous and we agreed that this is something leaders will work on.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve progress in the sixth form. Your effective actions have created an aspirational culture, resulting in students aiming high and improving their progress, and increasing numbers are choosing to access university.

You have carefully evaluated the effectiveness of the school, and where you have identified areas to improve, you have taken appropriate action to do so. For example, you recognise that the attendance of some groups of pupils is lower than the national average. You have developed new strategies to tackle this and the actions you are taking are starting to increase attendance. We agreed, however, that there remains work to do to ensure that attendance continues to rise.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders keep well-documented records which are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders know pupils well and put in place appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and those who need extra help.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and have someone to go to if they need help. Most pupils say that bullying is rare and that if it does happen, you will deal with it. Pupils receive appropriate education about keeping themselves safe online and on risks; however, this is stronger in key stages 4 and 5 than in key stage 3.

Inspection findings

- Pupils make better progress than they did in the previous academic year across a wide range of subjects. The latest school performance information and work in pupils' books indicate that the difference between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is diminishing and pupils' attainment at key stage 4 is improving overall.
- Leaders ensure that they spend additional funds for disadvantaged pupils on strategies that lead to better progress and attainment for this group. An additional teacher in mathematics has supported small-group work to enable pupils to make better progress and to catch up when they fall behind. Spending on a literacy programme has led to some success in improving reading skills. Leaders agree, however, that the evaluation of some strategies lacks focus and this is currently being addressed.
- Governors provide strong and appropriate challenge to school leaders to ensure that there is a constant focus on school improvement. There is accountability at all levels. Regular departmental reviews with senior leaders and governors take place, which hold middle leaders to account for their work while providing the opportunity to develop professionally and celebrate their successes.
- Leaders are ensuring that teachers teach well. Through a rigorous programme of professional development that leaders develop according to need, teachers improve the quality of their work. Leaders ensure that strong quality assurance leads to improved teaching and improved progress for pupils across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and under regular review. Recent changes have strengthened the curriculum offer in science so that pupils can choose to study separate sciences. The number of pupils choosing to study English Baccalaureate subjects is increasing as pupils become more confident in their

own abilities. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to study vocational qualifications, with strengths in performing arts and sport studies. However, the provision for careers advice and British values education is stronger in key stage 4 and key stage 5 than it is in key stage 3. Further work is required to ensure that the provision is strong across all key stages.

- A review of the sixth form shows that leadership is highly effective. Leaders ensure that there is a good range of academic and vocational subjects for students to choose and the school accommodates students who wish to take a combination of both. Attainment in academic subjects is strong and improving and vocational attainment is well above national averages.
- Sixth-form students value the careers advice and guidance that they receive. This strong provision ensures that students prepare well for the world of work and have a full understanding of the options available to them. Links with local employers sometimes lead to employment for some students and others progress to university or apprenticeships in line with their interests and aspirations. Very few students leave and are not in education, employment or training.
- Over time, attendance has been at or above the national average until the last academic year, where it fell below for the first time. Leaders have taken immediate action to strengthen their systems for monitoring and rewarding attendance. Attendance information shows that this is starting to improve, but there is further work to do to ensure that improvements are sustained.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Overall, pupils follow instructions quickly and lessons flow with few disruptions. Leaders accept that the behaviour of a small number of pupils outside lessons requires further attention.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the provision for personal, social, health and economic education has a stronger focus on pupils learning how to take responsibility for their own behaviour
- the promotion of British values and careers is strengthened in key stage 3 so that pupils have a greater awareness of life in modern Britain
- pupils' attendance continues to improve, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, and governors, trustees and pupils. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting observations of learning and scrutinising pupils' work jointly with senior leaders. We checked and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information, pupils' progress information, and attendance information. We also took account of 109 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View (including 60 extended responses from parents), 70 responses to the student questionnaire and 71 responses to the staff questionnaire.