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Short inspection of Northfleet Technology College

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017 with Frederick Valletta, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide strong and determined leadership aimed at ensuring high-quality education for every pupil, regardless of their ability or circumstances. Your staff support your vision and work hard to maintain and improve the strengths of the school. The caring and stimulating culture you have created enables all pupils to strive to make strong progress and achieve well.

Pupils behave very well at the school. They are kind and respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils say they are happy and feel safe in school. The wide range of clubs and trips provided by the school is appreciated by pupils. Pupils want to achieve their best and they are keen to attend the many extra lessons provided by teachers after school and at the weekend. Pupils like coming to school and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance.

Governors know the school very well and they provide strong challenge to you and your leadership team. Governors supported you when you made bold and effective decisions to create a curriculum which enthuses and encourages your pupils. The specialised approach to learning in Year 7 and 8 helps pupils to progress rapidly and makes the best use of teachers' skills and experience. Local employers and parents support the emphasis you place on vocational courses that maintain pupils' interest

and lead to rapid progress for all. This curriculum helps pupils who arrive needing extra help to catch up with their learning.

You have developed effective strategies to support subject and progress leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, leaders tackle shortcomings promptly. You know the strengths of the school and where further improvement is needed, notably in science and humanities.

Leaders and governors responded promptly to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Consequently, the quality of pupils' written work has improved, including their use of punctuation. However, the quality of teaching is not consistently of the highest standard and therefore results are not equally good in all subjects over time. Also, leaders recognise the need to increase the proportion of pupils studying a broad range of academic subjects at key stage 4 further, to widen pupils' post-16 opportunities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. All staff are trained regularly on how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. School leaders work well with external agencies to help pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Pupils value lessons and assemblies which explain how to keep themselves, and their friends and family safe. Pupils feel that all staff are approachable and pupils know whom they can turn to if they have concerns.

Overall attendance is good and leaders monitor and follow up absences thoroughly. Recent efforts to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils have been successful. As a result, leaders are effective in ensuring that pupils, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are safe and in school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors focused on the following lines of enquiry: how successfully leaders are tackling areas for improvement from the previous inspection; the achievement of the most able pupils; the extent to which standards in science and humanities are rising; how effectively the curriculum matches the needs of pupils; and how well the leadership structure contributes to raising the achievement of pupils.
- Leaders identify the most able pupils as soon as they start at the school and teachers monitor the progress of these pupils regularly. Teachers expect all of the most able pupils to tackle challenging work and as a result these pupils now make rapid progress.

- Leaders promote the value of humanities subjects and languages with pupils and parents. Consequently, the proportion of the most able and other pupils taking a subject from one or both of these areas at GCSE is increasing.
- Senior leaders work with subject leaders to strengthen the quality of teaching in science and the humanities, particularly in history. In science, teachers now help pupils to learn core facts, achieve good scores in practical assessments and write extended answers to questions. Leaders anticipate that this will help standards in science to rise significantly in the future, as can already be seen from modest improvements in pupils' current performance. The GCSE results for the small number of pupils taking history in 2017 are currently set to rise substantially, as a result of improvements to the quality of teaching in this subject.
- Leaders' current emphasis on vocational education meets the needs of many pupils very well. Governors and leaders are determined to retain the vocational subjects, which provide very successful routes into post-16 education and employment.
- As a result of a review of the sixth-form curriculum, students are now offered an increasingly wide range of academic and vocational courses, which are attracting increasing numbers of potential students.
- You have created a highly effective curriculum and leadership structure that overcomes many of the difficulties of recruiting and retaining experienced staff. Teachers work together to plan and deliver lessons to flexible groupings of pupils. As a result, teachers new to the profession develop their practice rapidly, and have the potential to become effective leaders. The culture you have created develops and retains good teachers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching continues to improve so that pupils' performance is consistently strong in all subjects over time
- the curriculum continues to develop so that most pupils study across a broader range of academic subjects during key stage 4.

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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Turner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, Frederick Valletta, Ofsted Inspector, and I met with you, leaders, governors, staff and pupils. We visited classes to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books. We observed pupils at break, at lunchtime and as they left the school. We considered documentary evidence, including that related to safeguarding, attendance and the progress of current pupils. We took account of 49 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View and the outcomes of a staff survey.