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Mr Nigel Burgoyne
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Dear Mr Burgoyne

Short inspection of Kesgrave High School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2017 with Adrian Lyons HMI and Kathryn Herlock, 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 September 2013.

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 passionate and well-focused leadership and you place the importance of a wide curriculum at its core. You have ensured that pupils are able to study a wide variety of subjects when they join your school. This commitment is maintained when pupils make their GCSE option choices. Students who enter your sixth form are incredibly grateful for the choice of over 40 courses and the determination of leaders to ensure that they can study the range of courses that is most appropriate for them. Teachers share your ambition for pupils to excel across the curriculum. They agree that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils.

Pupils' highly positive behaviour and attitudes to learning reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They are proud of their school and they are grateful for the opportunities that are available to them throughout the curriculum and as a result of the wide range of extra-curricular activities that you offer. Pupils value the many positions of responsibility available to them, along with the high quality of pastoral care that they receive from your staff. Parents are positive and supportive of the school, with one commenting: 'It's a fabulous school with welcoming staff who are able to address any concerns. I would highly recommend this school.'

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, the quality of teaching and leadership has improved since the previous inspection. Sixth-form students continue to make good progress, while key stage 4 pupils have made progress that was either above, or in line with, national average. You are disappointed with some aspects of the 2017 GCSE results but are confident that your curriculum changes will support pupils to make good progress across the English Baccalaureate subjects from 2018 onwards.

Governors continue to provide you with support and offer robust accountability. They know the school well, are passionate about its role within the community and they are clear about what the school needs to do to improve further. Leaders and governors are in agreement that they need to focus on ensuring that the needs of the most able pupils are met more effectively, that disadvantaged pupils make more progress and that all leaders are consistent in their drive, ambition and actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders undertake all appropriate checks on staff and these records are scrutinised on a regular basis by the chair of the governing body.

Pupils feel safe and enjoy school as a result of the high level of pastoral care that they receive. They participate in a wide variety of sessions which support them to be safe and stay safe, for example sex and relationships education and the safe use of the internet.

Staff undertake regular safeguarding training and leaders provide training for parents about staying safe online. The needs of children in care are met and they make good progress as a result of the support provided by leaders and specialist staff. Governors play an important role in checking safeguarding practices as part of their regular visits to the school.

Inspection findings

- I pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good. My first question related to the apparent dip in progress, suggested by your 2017 GCSE results, and how you are responding to this. You recognise that there are a range of complex factors that have contributed to your pupils' overall progress score in 2017, not least the decision taken by leaders and governors to allow pupils to continue with GCSE subject choices that did not cover the full range of English Baccalaureate subjects. You were clear that asking pupils to change the courses that they had been promised was not in their best interests. Your new curriculum model still allows pupils to undertake a wide range of GCSE subjects, but it also allows them to study more elements of the English Baccalaureate. A combination of this redesigned curriculum, good-quality teaching and new, rigorous assessment practices are ensuring that pupils within the school are currently making good progress overall. You have recognised that your most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils could do even better. As a result, you are taking effective action to increase their rates of progress.

- A second line of enquiry related to the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and that of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well. Leaders have a good understanding of the special needs of pupils and how best to support them. Leaders provided many examples of how individual pupils have made progress and moved on to carefully thought-out courses in further education. Pupils are supported well in the main school curriculum. As a result, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. While some have specific health issues providing a barrier to high levels of attendance, many have full attendance. Leaders have identified a range of appropriate qualifications to give credit for the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders are passionate about supporting disadvantaged pupils. Historically, the progress of these pupils has been similar to, or at times better than, other pupils. In 2017 a difference in progress was identified which led leaders to take immediate action during the autumn term. Leaders have recognised that the previous approach to interventions was not effective enough. The newly introduced strategy is well planned and begins in Year 6 before pupils arrive at the school. It is based on research and what leaders have identified as best practice around the country. However, as the current programme is in its early stages of development, it is too soon to see its impact.
- Students in the sixth form have been making good and improving progress since the previous inspection and I was keen to establish whether these improvements have been sustained. Students benefit from a wide range of courses and value being able to study exactly what they want. Their motivation, their access to good-quality teaching and the extensive support that they are offered from the sixth-form team is enabling them to flourish. The overall progress of current students continues to be good. Leaders are aware of the next steps required to support individual pupils and particular subjects where progress is less secure. Students are proud to be a part of the sixth form and they are successful in their applications to education, employment and training at the end of their studies. One student commented: 'It's not just Kesgrave, it's the community of Kesgrave.'
- Finally, I wanted to check the extent to which leaders are improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics and languages. You have strengthened the leadership of both subject areas and have ensured that improvement plans are closely monitored. Leaders receive coaching and the impact of their work is regularly evaluated as part of your 'evaluation cycle'. The progress of pupils in these areas is improving, but you acknowledge that teaching quality is still inconsistent and that pupils' progress needs to be monitored more carefully.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they reduce the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally
- teaching is planned to challenge the most able pupils

- leaders at all levels are effective in using the school's systems, structures and routines to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently good.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, leaders, other school staff, the chair and other representatives of the governing body, and groups of pupils. Together with you and other leaders, we made short visits to a wide range of classes to observe teaching, look at pupils' books and to see pupils at work. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record and records of child protection. We also considered the 253 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire from parents, 365 from pupils and 86 responses from staff.