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Mr Paul Cornish
Principal
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Dear Mr Cornish

Short inspection of Newton Abbot College

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2018 with Anita Hems, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since taking up your post, soon after the previous inspection, you have brought an inclusive and collaborative leadership approach. You lead by example, always modelling positive relationships. As a result, you are well respected by staff, pupils, parents and carers alike. Senior and middle leaders feel held to account for their performance, and yet fully supported in their roles.

Pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was in line with the national average in 2016 and 2017. Students in the sixth form make good progress. Last year, students made significantly better progress on A-level courses than was seen nationally. You have worked successfully to ensure that students and staff see the sixth form as an integral part of the school. You have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Their conduct is good in lessons and as they move around the large site. Pupils respond well to being given responsibilities. For example, many key stage 4 pupils take on various roles as prefects. This builds their confidence and raises their aspirations.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that good practice is shared effectively between teachers so they can learn from each other. You place a strong emphasis on helping teachers develop their skills. The vast majority of staff say that they are well supported in their professional learning. The school was also

asked to improve pupils' achievement in history and modern foreign languages. You have made changes to middle leadership in both of these subjects. This is leading to improvement in pupils' progress.

Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been well below the progress made by other pupils nationally for the last three years. You have reorganised senior leaders' roles to ensure that leadership of this area of the school's work is given higher priority. This is beginning to have some impact, but disadvantaged pupils' progress is still not consistently good. You made careers education, advice and guidance a whole-school improvement objective this year. This has led to the development of a comprehensive strategy for careers education from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils and students are well informed about their next steps at each key stage.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders ensure that safeguarding policy and practice in the school is in line with statutory requirements. Staff are suitably trained and their awareness of safeguarding procedures is maintained well by regular updates and briefings from senior leaders. Where concerns are raised by staff about the welfare of any pupil, timely action is taken and accurate records are kept. Senior leaders' communication with other agencies is effective, and so, at times of crisis, pupils receive the help they need as fast as possible.

Pupils feel safe in school. The large majority of pupils who responded to the Ofsted survey said that bullying of any form is rare, but when it does happen staff deal with it effectively. The school's work to prevent bullying was recognised by a prestigious national award in 2016. Pupils are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, prefects regularly present assemblies to other pupils highlighting topical issues of safety awareness.

Parents believe that the school's systems for promoting the safety and well-being of pupils are effective. Staff are aware of their responsibility to be vigilant for signs of harm to pupils. You encourage all staff to discuss any concerns they may have. As a result, you have established an open and vigilant culture of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- To decide if the school remained good, the first key line of enquiry looked at the school's use of additional funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was in the lowest 20% of schools nationally. In 2017, the progress of this group of pupils fell further. Senior leaders have reacted to the weak progress of these pupils by introducing a number of initiatives to support them. For example, current Year 11 disadvantaged pupils benefited from intensive help as they prepared for their GCSE examinations. Senior leaders have improved systems of communication between staff so that teachers are now well aware of the needs of these pupils, many of whom are among the most able in the school. These initiatives are showing signs of success. Even so,

disadvantaged pupils' progress across different year groups is inconsistent, and gaps remain in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

- A new chair of the governing body took up her role in September 2017. In the past, governors did not challenge senior leaders effectively over the progress of specific groups of pupils. The governing body has reduced in size, and has begun to challenge senior leaders, and middle leaders in particular subject areas, more rigorously. However, governors do not yet evaluate the effectiveness of the school's spending of pupil premium funding in sufficient detail.
- A second key line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of senior leaders' efforts to improve teaching in science, languages and humanities. Pupils' progress in these subject areas has been weak in recent years, particularly for the most able pupils. New middle leaders were appointed in languages and history in September 2016. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving have increased in these subjects. In 2017, pupils' progress rose in science, languages and humanities. Nevertheless, the most able pupils still lagged behind other pupils nationally in science and humanities. Continued improvement in teaching is enabling current pupils to make better progress in humanities subjects. However, science teaching is not yet effective enough to help all pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders have ensured that securing further improvement in teaching across the school has been given a high profile this year. All staff are aware of the urgency of this work. They show strong commitment because senior leaders take a well-considered, collaborative approach to improving teachers' skills. While it has become more effective in many areas, senior leaders acknowledge that teaching does not yet provide a consistently high level of challenge to the most able pupils.
- The final key line of enquiry evaluated the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance. Last year, senior leaders recognised the need to improve the provision of careers education. They successfully incorporated new guidance from the government into a comprehensive careers education programme. This illustrates the success of senior leaders' efforts to ensure that school strategies are coherent across key stages 3 to 5. Pupils are well informed about the possibilities open to them when they leave school. Governors are aware of their statutory duty to allow providers of technical education and apprenticeships access to pupils to inform them about technical qualifications.
- Rates of pupils' attendance have been well above average for the past three years. Senior leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance. They give any Year 7 pupils who find it difficult to attend well effective help to improve. Consequently, current pupils' attendance continues to be above average. Few pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Parents support the school strongly. They are satisfied with the communication they receive from the school. Parents who replied to the Parent View survey believe that the school is well led and managed and the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend this school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is evaluated more effectively and understood by governors
- teaching challenges the most able pupils effectively, and meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils more closely
- science teaching improves so that more pupils make the progress they are capable of in this subject.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. I held a meeting with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. We made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. We looked at examples of pupils' work. We held meetings with pupils from Years 8, 9 and 10 and we spoke with many other pupils informally. We scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to behaviour and attendance. We took account of responses to questionnaires from 80 staff and 104 pupils. We considered 126 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View.