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David Holt  
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Dear Mr Holt

### **Short inspection of St Luke's Science and Sports College**

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2018 with Carol Hannaford, 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 January 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.**

You and the senior team are leading the school with determination and optimism in the face of different challenges. You acknowledge that the school is not where you want it to be, because pupils' achievement is not high enough. Over time, pupils have not made sufficient progress in different areas of the curriculum, including science, languages and humanities. Leaders have taken difficult decisions repeatedly to tackle staff underperformance. However, their efforts have been hampered by recruitment difficulties and budget restrictions. This has meant that some problems have persisted and the quality of teaching is still not good enough in certain areas. Nevertheless, there are 'green shoots' of improvement in current pupils' progress in certain subjects, such as languages.

During your time in post, you have strengthened the senior team around you. Consequently, measures to bring about improvement are gathering momentum. However, leaders have been slow to implement some of these measures quickly enough. For example, the curriculum's unsuitability has accounted, to a degree, for pupils' underachievement since the previous inspection. However, it is only now that leaders are reviewing the curriculum, and they have yet to implement changes fully.

Senior leaders are now demanding more of middle leaders, who are increasingly shouldering more responsibility for the monitoring of teaching and the progress of

pupils. Middle leaders are rising to the challenge, but the development of middle leadership is a work in progress. The impact of their work is not yet fully evident in pupils' achievement.

Leaders are currently well supported by governors and the school improvement partner, who are clear about the school's weaknesses. They do not seek to excuse them. Governors have been proactive about seeking external support to improve their work. Consequently, they have responded positively to a review of governance, which has helped them to improve their practice. They have become more skilled at asking important questions about achievement and using different sources of information to inform their questioning. As a result, governors have become more effective at challenging leaders. Nevertheless, over time, the work of governors has not resulted in higher achievement for pupils in some areas.

The school improvement partner provides an honest, objective evaluation of the school's effectiveness. His support has helped to bolster leaders' resilience and keep their focus on the most important issues.

The school is a welcoming, inclusive place. Pupils are friendly and considerate to each other and adults. This was particularly visible at breaktime, when pupils were observed to cooperate well with each other and respect each other's personal space, even though room was limited. Pupils wear their uniform well and look smart.

You are open, receptive and accessible in the way you interact with others. All leaders seek to build positive relationships. Nevertheless, some pupils, staff and parents are not satisfied with aspects of the school's work. They do not feel that leaders take account of their concerns fully. Some staff express concerns about workload.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to consider during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of safeguarding and leaders' actions to raise the achievement of pupils across the curriculum in key stage 4. We also considered the extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs and whether attendance is improving and exclusions reducing. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection Findings', where they have not already been referred to.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The designated safeguarding lead has a clear understanding of the school's systems and procedures to keep pupils safe. He heads up a wider team that is also aware of its responsibilities and is well trained. Staff have the time and resources to meet their responsibilities. Designated leads benefit from positive relationships with external agencies that provide additional support where necessary.

The online referral system for pupils causing concern contains well-organised, detailed records. These records are chronologically ordered and highlight the

involvement of staff and actions taken to resolve issues. Consequently, leaders are able to monitor continuing cases effectively.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date, detailed and complete.

Pupils report that they feel safe at school and that there are staff they would speak to if they had concerns. However, a few of the pupils who inspectors spoke to, and a minority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, expressed concern over how well the school deals with bullying.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders are providing staff with training and professional development to improve their teaching practice. However, some of these initiatives are new and it is too soon to judge their impact.
- Pupils behave well in class. They set to work quickly, listen to instructions and are attentive to their teachers. In part, this is because of the recently revised behaviour system. The system is making greater demands of pupils because expectations of how they behave are higher. The new 'strict' approach has not been well received by all pupils and parents, largely because staff do not always apply it consistently. Nevertheless, the system is helping to ensure that, overall, there is less poor behaviour in class.
- Teachers do not set tasks that are sufficiently challenging for some pupils, notably middle- and high-ability pupils. Teachers often set work on a 'one-size-fits-all' basis so that they present pupils with work that they find too easy. Consequently, pupils become bored in class and do not care enough about improving their work. This was an area for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, but progress in this area has been slow.
- The curriculum is not currently sustainable or well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders recognise that it is not sufficiently academic. They are in the process of slimming down the number of options available to steer pupils more effectively towards suitable qualifications, and to work within the constraints of the budget.
- Leaders are committed to establishing a curriculum underpinned by knowledge, and which stresses the importance of English and mathematics. Consequently, in class, pupils are reviewing their learning more frequently, in order to reinforce and build their knowledge, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making sufficient progress and are lagging behind their peers. This is because leaders have not identified their needs precisely enough or put in place provision that is matched to their needs. Leaders are not sufficiently clear about how they should spend pupil premium funding to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement most effectively.
- Attendance, overall, and for different groups, is improving. Staff have worked hard, and successfully, to tackle absence and reverse a declining trend. Persistent absence has also been reduced. Attendance is now in line with the national average. Improvements are partly a result of closer tracking of absence and swift

follow-up by staff. These systems are firmly established so that improvements are sustainable.

- Exclusions from school have fallen because of changes to the behaviour system. Staff are now finding more ways within school to deal with poor behaviour without having to resort to exclusion.
- Pupils are not consistently acting on the advice that they receive from teachers in order to improve their work. Some teachers, in subjects such as science, provide little guidance, and pupils are 'left to their own devices'. Pupils do not know how to improve their work and, particularly in the case of boys, take little pride in it.
- The proportion of pupils leaving the school to go on to further education, training or employment has risen successively over the last three years. This proportion is now higher than the national average.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of leadership and management improves as a result of:
  - leaders precisely identifying the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils and providing appropriate support
  - leaders monitoring the spending and impact of pupil premium funding more effectively
  - middle leaders continuing to develop their expertise, to monitor the quality of teaching and to hold staff to account for the progress of pupils
  - leaders evaluating and adapting newly introduced teaching strategies to maximise their impact on raising pupils' achievement
  - leaders successfully redesigning the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils, enabling them to make better progress across their subjects
  - leaders' efforts to engage with the minority of parents, pupils and staff who are dissatisfied with certain aspects of the school's work, and in explaining why decisions have been taken
- the quality of teaching improves and pupils' achievement rises as a result of:
  - teachers having high expectations of what middle- and high-ability pupils can achieve
  - teachers planning work that meets the needs of pupils of different abilities
  - pupils acting on guidance that they receive from teachers to improve their work consistently across subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with you and other senior leaders. Inspectors also spoke with middle leaders, the pupil premium coordinator, governors, the designated safeguarding lead and staff responsible for attendance and pupils' pastoral care. In addition, the lead inspector spoke to the school improvement partner. Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils.

Inspectors visited lessons jointly with senior staff to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and information relating to pupils' achievement and attendance. Additionally, inspectors scrutinised governors' minutes, school improvement partner notes of visits and various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

The lead inspector took account of 154 responses to the Parent View online survey. In addition, he took account of 71 responses to the staff survey issued during the inspection.