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Mrs Julie Summerfield  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Summerfield

### **Short inspection of Horndean Technology College**

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Hugh Betterton and Anne Cullum, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Your vision of Horndean as an inclusive school permeates every aspect of your work and strongly supports pupils' development as young citizens. You and your leadership team review and revise what the school does, to make sure it is relevant and stimulating for its pupils. Consequently, pupils grow in self-assurance, value how much they are supported and talk with pride about their school. Over time, pupil numbers have increased, demonstrating parents' confidence in the 'excellent opportunities' that they feel the school provides. Parents commented on how 'broad-ranging' and 'exceptional' extra-curricular activities help their children to become 'well-rounded young adults'.

Since the last inspection, you have improved the quality of teaching and learning in science. As a result, pupils now make good progress from their different starting points in science, because of the effective teaching they experience. Across the broader curriculum, standards of attainment are high overall. Most pupils make similarly good progress as their peers nationally. However, standards in English have declined since the last inspection, linked to difficulties around staff recruitment. Things are beginning to improve, and pupils are now making better progress than in the past, particularly in key stage 4, where the impact of teacher shortages is minimised.

You were also asked to improve the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Your actions have had some success, but not consistently so. Where disadvantaged pupils attend regularly, they generally make good progress with their learning. However, there are some pupils whose attendance, and consequently their progress, remain too low. You and governors have rightly kept these pupils as a focus for your work but have not evaluated its impact as closely as you could. Consequently, work in this area is not sufficiently focused around those actions that lead to the greatest improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff understand their responsibilities, because of the effective training that keeps their knowledge up to date. They know how to keep pupils safe, and are vigilant to local risks. A comprehensive programme of online-safety training involves parents successfully in this part of the school's work. Pupils highly rate their 'Equalities Group', which challenges discrimination and encourages independence. Student leadership programmes are prominent on the school's website and many parents spoke very favourably of the way that extra-curricular activities help their children to become more resilient.

Pupils feel safe and know whom they can talk to if they have worries or concerns. Most pupils describe bullying as rare and dealt with effectively, although a small number of pupils and parents expressed a less-positive view. Referrals to any outside agencies are made in a timely fashion. Pupils, especially the most vulnerable, access useful extra help from specialists such as those in the school's resource base for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Governors provide additional support and work well with you to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All required recruitment checks are carried out thoroughly and recorded diligently.

### **Inspection findings**

- We looked at the school's work to improve pupils' attendance, which was below-average last year. You have raised the profile of attendance in the school, and absence rates have dropped as a result. You rightly hold a firm line with those parents who persist with requests for term-time holidays. Most pupils now attend school regularly, in line with national averages.
- Despite leaders' efforts, some disadvantaged pupils do not attend as regularly as other pupils, which impedes their academic progress. Leaders track disadvantaged pupils' attendance carefully, taking useful action and seeing some improvement as a result. However, too many remain persistently absent.
- The standards attained by disadvantaged pupils in the last three years were much lower than those of other pupils who had similar starting points nationally. Leaders have successfully introduced a wide range of tried-and-tested methods to improve pupils' outcomes. Middle leaders monitor carefully to ensure that teachers apply these methods consistently across different subjects.

Consequently, they identify accurately where disadvantaged pupils fall behind and then help those pupils to catch up. As one pupil explained: 'It's difficult, but when you get it, it makes you feel really, really clever.' As a result of these actions, disadvantaged pupils are now achieving a similar quality of work in their books over time as other pupils. Where disadvantaged pupils attend less regularly, these improvements are less evident.

- We looked together at standards in English, where progress by the end of Year 11 has declined in recent years. Notable staffing changes and recruitment challenges have persistently affected the quality of teaching in this subject since the last inspection. Things have stabilised recently, resulting in a more consistently effective approach to teaching and learning, although some variation in quality remains. Inspectors saw teachers developing pupils' literacy skills successfully, leading to good-quality writing. Pupils' progress in English is now stronger than in the past, particularly in key stage 4.
- In a range of other subjects, such as mathematics, science, German and geography, subject leaders work closely together to identify the most effective strategies that work for individual pupils. They use this best practice to shape teacher training, so that newly qualified or less-experienced teachers swiftly gain useful specialist subject knowledge. This is particularly effective in improving the quality of teaching in subjects which have seen a higher turnover of staff in recent times. Leaders monitor learning carefully to ensure that these methods are being implemented successfully. As a result, pupils achieve increasingly strong outcomes over time and in published examination results at the end of Year 11.
- The curriculum is well-designed to match the needs of all pupils, whatever their ability or aptitude. Older pupils describe feeling well-served by the curriculum, recognising how it motivates them to succeed. Consequently, pupils achieve well across a suitably broad range of subjects by the end of Year 11. Where progress is slightly weaker, it links to subject areas where staff turnover has had a notable impact. Pupils benefit extensively from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which develop their independence and broaden their experience. Parents are particularly positive about the effect of these.
- As part of the Havant Federation of schools, you have successfully tackled local and shared concerns about pupils who are at risk of exclusion from school. As a result, permanent exclusions at Horndean remain very low and the number of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion has declined. Leaders increasingly and successfully focus pupils on the importance of being ready to learn in lessons. Standards of behaviour around the school are strongly conducive to good learning. Pupils say that most of their lessons are calm and orderly. Where disruption occasionally occurs, they link it to where ongoing changes of teacher have been a factor.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their actions to reduce the persistent absence of some disadvantaged pupils are evaluated and adapted precisely, so that attendance consistently matches that of other pupils in school and nationally
- pupils' progress in English becomes as strong as in other subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Keith Pailthorpe  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held discussions with you, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders, a representative of the local authority and three governors, including the chair. We spoke both formally and informally with pupils during the school day, as well as with teachers and support staff. We scrutinised safeguarding arrangements, including staff-recruitment checks and records. We looked at records of governing body meetings and considered evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including your own analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Inspectors visited lessons, tutor times and assembly, accompanied by you or members of your senior team. We looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and observed pupils at break and lunchtime.

We considered 130 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, including 125 free-text responses. We also took account of survey responses from 106 members of staff and 659 pupils.