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Ms Joyce Shorrock
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Shorrock

Short inspection of John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2018 with Jackie Thornalley, 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.

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.**

This year has been a challenging one for the school. Since September 2017, you have willingly shouldered the responsibility of the acting headship, with little preparation, and have led your team of senior leaders successfully. Recently, governors have provided you with additional personnel. You have ensured that you have a clear understanding of the school's strengths. With senior leaders, you have accurately identified the key priorities on the school's improvement plan. However, some of the improvement targets lack specific success criteria and the plan does not focus on improving pupils' progress precisely enough. Governors do not use the improvement plan to hold you to account. They do not monitor routinely whether senior leaders are working effectively towards achieving each of the priorities identified in the plan or are being successful in improving pupils' progress.

Leaders and staff provide strong pastoral care for every pupil. You and senior leaders create a positive environment, where all pupils are encouraged to be the best that they can be. Pupils value the school's house system. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors all identified their heads of house as being the adult they are most likely to speak with if they have a concern. School staff provide support for parents and carers, and families and, as a result, more parents engage with the school and with their children's education. As one parent stated, 'The school has a

strong family feel where the children's needs are nurtured and well cared for.' Most pupils like coming to school and enjoy learning together.

Pupils behave well. During social times around the school and within lessons, they show each other and adults respect. Pupils are accepting of people who have different backgrounds from their own. They say that bullying does take place in school, but they are confident that teachers will act swiftly to resolve any issues.

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching carefully. They provide additional help, which has improved the practice of some, but not all, teachers. An overwhelming majority of staff feel well supported and motivated by leaders; they are proud to be a member of the school.

The school predicts that pupils currently in Year 11 will make progress that is broadly average, compared with that of other pupils nationally. However, there are significant variations between the progress of different groups of pupils and pupils' progress in different subjects. Leaders recognise that middle leaders do not use the information that the teachers collect about pupils' progress with enough precision to inform the work in their subject areas and reduce these inconsistencies.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to ensure that teachers had high expectations and challenged all pupils in lessons, particularly the most able. Some teachers promote 'stretch and challenge', particularly with the most able pupils. However, some work is too easy for the most able pupils. Some teachers do not challenge their misconceptions, meaning that the learning of these pupils slows. According to the school's information, progress of the most able pupils is not improving quickly enough.

Another recommendation from the last inspection was for teachers to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning in the classroom. As soon as pupils arrive at the school, leaders encourage them to be, 'aspirational, inspirational and motivational' in all aspects of their school life. Younger pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 engage in 'opening minds' lessons to promote increased resilience and independent learning. These pupils know their targets and say that teachers challenge them to achieve them. Some pupils are able to identify accurately strengths and weaknesses in their own and their peers' work. However, leaders have not evaluated thoroughly the effectiveness of these, and other, strategies. For example, individual 'improvement plans' for pupils to track their own progress are not used consistently. Many older pupils lack the confidence and skills to identify what they need to do to move their learning on and make good progress.

Inspectors also identified the need for leaders to continue to improve attendance, through rigorous monitoring and increased parental engagement. Leaders manage attendance more systematically. Pupils' attendance has improved, including for those pupils entitled to pupil premium funding and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Parents value the strengthened transition arrangements that leaders have implemented so that Year 7 pupils settle into the school more quickly and attend well from the start. The attendance officer's

early interventions with specific families, including the use of additional external support, have meant that these pupils attend school more frequently.

Safeguarding is effective

Senior leaders and governors take their responsibilities for pupils' welfare and safety very seriously. They have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders make appropriate employment checks on all staff and records of these checks are thorough. Staff and governors are well trained and are kept up to date regularly with the latest guidance. They understand their responsibilities in ensuring that pupils are safe, including any issues involving extremism and radicalisation.

Processes for making referrals are clear and understood by all. The members of the safeguarding team work together efficiently to ensure that no pupil slips through the net. Records show that pupils' files are thorough, detailed and up to date. Leaders responsible for safeguarding communicate in a timely manner with outside agencies where this may be helpful.

Pupils feel safe in school, and staff and parents agree that this is the case. Pupils know how to stay safe and they are aware of the potential dangers posed by the internet. Teachers use personal, social and health (PSH) education lessons to discuss staying safe with pupils, including issues surrounding mental health. External agencies support the school's work effectively to promote pupils' safety.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, pupils' progress was broadly average when compared with national information. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made more progress than other pupils, including in English and mathematics. However, pupils' overall progress in English, mathematics and humanities was significantly below the national average. The most able pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils in humanities, and in mathematics they performed in the bottom 10% nationally. Similarly, boys' progress fell significantly compared with 2016, particularly in English, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- During the inspection, inspectors looked closely at the progress of pupils in English and in mathematics, including the most able pupils in mathematics. Leaders have introduced a range of different strategies aimed at improving pupils' progress. For example, inspectors saw evidence in pupils' mathematics books of pupils evaluating their own work skilfully in order to move their learning on. However, teachers have not applied these new strategies consistently and leaders' evaluations of the impact of these approaches are not thorough enough. While there have been some improvements, they cannot identify confidently what is and what is not working to improve pupils' progress.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 are making slightly better progress in mathematics compared with 2017. However, the progress of the most able pupils, although

better than in 2017, is still well below last year's national average. Pupils' progress in Years 9 and 10 is stronger, including for the most able pupils.

- In English, Year 11 pupils' progress has notably declined compared with 2017. Year 10 pupils' progress is stronger. Teachers of English have been involved in additional examination training; however, it is too early to assess its impact. Similarly, trials with single-sex boys' classes in Year 10 have only recently begun. Support for Year 7 pupils to improve their reading skills is having a positive impact, with some pupils making impressive gains in their reading ages.
- Pupils' progress in humanities declined in 2017, particularly for the most able pupils. In humanities lessons observed by inspectors, the teaching did not challenge pupils enough. The teachers have introduced pupil progress files to encourage pupils to become more independent. Inspectors saw pupils use them to good effect in history and religious studies, where their use was helping them to take more responsibility for their learning. However, you do not expect results in humanities to be significantly better than last year.
- Boys currently in Year 11 are not making as much progress as girls, particularly in English. Teachers have introduced a competitive element into some lessons, for example in English and in physical education. This strategy is improving their engagement with their work and their progress. Boys currently in Year 10 are making stronger progress.
- In preparation for pupils' next steps, leaders ensure that all pupils receive a one-to-one careers interview to discuss their options. An increased proportion of pupils, including boys, are securing sustained education, employment or training placements post-16.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have high expectations of the most able pupils and plan work with sufficient challenge for these pupils to make good progress
- approaches used to improve pupils' progress, particularly that of boys in English and humanities, are evaluated carefully and amended accordingly
- all pupils become more self-confident and resilient learners, especially older pupils, so that they actively seek to improve and take greater responsibility for their own progress
- governors improve their understanding of the progress that the pupils make, in order to hold leaders stringently to account for the impact of their actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and subject leaders of English, mathematics and humanities. As lead inspector, I met with four representatives of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.

Inspectors observed an assembly and carried out 10 lesson observations. Three observations of teaching were jointly undertaken with you, in your role as acting headteacher. During the lesson observations, inspectors examined the quality of work in pupils' books. We spoke with a selection of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as speaking with pupils informally. We also observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break- and lunchtimes, and during lessons.

Inspectors examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding records and policies, the school's recruitment procedures, attendance, the school's use of pupil premium funding, and pupils' performance information. We took into account the school's own self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Inspectors also considered information on the school's website.

Inspectors reviewed the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 16 responses parents submitted to the free-text service. Inspectors also considered the 29 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 50 responses to the staff questionnaire. At the end of the day, inspectors gave feedback to you, senior leaders and members of the governing body.