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Mr Chris Norwood
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Dear Mr Norwood

Short inspection of Northfleet School for Girls

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017 with Nicholas Simmonds, 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 2012.

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 highly effective leadership and your ambition and drive have developed the school. You have a clear vision that is shared by all staff and governors, and communicated regularly to your pupils. Everyone is supporting your work to encourage pupils to excel, develop new skills and have positive attitudes. The commitment of staff to raising pupils' self-awareness and enhancing their personal development and welfare was clear to see throughout my visit.

Standards continue to improve in all subjects, especially in science, languages and humanities, and in the sixth form. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas to develop is accurate. This means that leaders are working on the right priorities to improve the school. The effective governing body provides you with the correct balance of support and challenge that helps to keep your plans on track.

Leaders know the school's pupils and families well. Collectively, staff provide effective support for all learners. It is clear that leaders, governors and staff at every level have established a culture in which everyone in the community is valued and treated with respect.

During our visits to classrooms, we observed very positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils were clearly enjoying the levels of challenge on offer and showed respect towards their teachers and each other. Pupils said that staff listen to their views and that you use their ideas very effectively to bring about improvements in the school. They are particularly proud of the work that the positive relationship ambassadors are doing to help other pupils with friendship issues. As a result, the school is a harmonious environment where pupils are happy.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to provide pupils, especially the most able, with more challenging work. You have done this successfully. Pupils' progress has improved as a result of better checks on their learning. Teachers now have a clear understanding of the progress of different groups. Leaders also ensure that teachers provide work which is both appropriate and challenging, matching the needs of different groups of pupils in their classes. Staff are very positive about the improvements you have made and said that they now work much more collaboratively. However, we agreed that not all teachers use questioning effectively enough to allow pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors are proactive and have ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding and keeping pupils safe are robust. This includes the required checks on the suitability of staff. Leaders ensure that statutory policies are fit for purpose and that all staff adhere consistently to the school's safeguarding procedures. Training, including for governors, is up to date. Because of this, staff are well equipped to deal with any emerging issues that may require their attention.

Helpful work with the local authority and other external agencies ensures that timely and appropriate interventions are made when required. Personalised support for individual pupils is a strength. Pupils know who to go to if they have problems, and are clear about what they have been taught about their own personal safety. Bullying is very rare and pupils are confident that any incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that staff care for them.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are taking effective action to tackle the historic issue of poor attendance of vulnerable pupils. There are improved systems in place, including an effective attendance team, which works well with parents and external agencies. Good systems are in place to monitor attendance, and leaders take prompt action when there are concerns about individual pupils. As a result, attendance of all groups of pupils, including those in the sixth form, is increasing.
- There are continuing improvements in pupils' achievement across most subjects. In the past, some of the most able pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. However, their progress is now in line with that of other pupils. Leaders work well together to share good practice. This is making a real difference to the

consistency of the quality of teaching and learning, especially at key stage 3. Teachers use assessment information well to deliver lessons which meet the needs of all pupils, including the most able.

- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, and the gap in their attainment is diminishing when compared with other pupils nationally from similar starting points. Leaders use pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils' all-round development, including their academic needs. Disadvantaged pupils' literacy skills have improved and this allows them to make better progress in other subjects. They benefit from taking part in after-school clubs and activities which help to build their self-confidence and future ambitions.

- The decline in standards in the sixth form has been reversed. Students are now making good progress in a range of academic and vocational subjects. Students said that they are well supported by their teachers who give them additional help and advice, particularly when they are not achieving as well as they should. There is good information for students about the courses that they can take in the sixth form and the range of opportunities available to them when they leave school. However, you rightly recognise that there are not yet enough opportunities to better equip students for life in modern British society.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance continues to improve to at least the national average, for all groups of pupils
- teachers' questioning is more consistently effective in helping pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding, so that pupils make increasingly strong progress in all their subjects
- the effective personal, social and health education programmes used at key stages 3 and 4 are developed so that students in the sixth form are better equipped for life in modern Britain.

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

Yours sincerely

David Smith
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, leaders, governors, staff and pupils. They visited lessons with senior leaders, talked to pupils and looked at their work. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, development planning, school policies and information about the attendance and progress of current pupils. Inspectors took account of the 35 parents, 56 staff and 111 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online surveys.