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Mr Andrew Evans
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Dear Mr Evans

Short inspection of John Masefield High School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017 with Huw Bishop, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your leaders and all staff show a genuine desire for pupils to be safe and happy while they achieve as well as they can in their studies. Your staff provide high-quality pastoral care for pupils, especially for those who are vulnerable in some way.

You know the school very well, including its strengths and weaknesses. Your self-evaluation is detailed, honest, accurate and understood by all, including governors. Your plans to address the few areas that need to improve are clear and appropriate. As a result, since the previous inspection, you have maintained the school's many strengths and ensured that improvement is evident in its few areas of weakness.

John Masefield High School is a strong community, and relationships are exemplary across the school. Morale is high. All members of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school, and almost all agreed that the school is well led and managed. Parents value your leadership and the education that the school provides for their children. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school is well led, and said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Many commented on the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school offers and its high-quality pastoral care. One parent spoke for many when they wrote:

'It is a fabulous school and my children enjoy going. The teachers are friendly and know, and care about, my children. All of my children have made good progress. The lunch and afterschool clubs are great. All in all, I am really glad we chose here for the children.'

At the previous inspection, you were charged with improving teaching by ensuring that lessons are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. Teaching is now strong in most subjects and the great majority of pupils achieve very well as a result. Teaching is particularly effective in English, mathematics, science, languages and food technology. However, some weaker teaching remains, especially in business studies, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than other pupils in some subjects, but this picture is improving.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leadership of this area is strong, as is the scrutiny provided by the governing body. All staff understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. They are well trained and regularly updated about safeguarding issues. Consequently, members of staff are vigilant and readily pass on any concerns they have about pupils. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Procedures to recruit staff safely are used well.

All pupils that we spoke to during the inspection said that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and almost all said that staff deal well with any that does happen. The curriculum includes regular teaching on how to stay safe. For example, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers that can arise when using the internet.

All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school, as did almost all parents who responded to Parent View.

Inspection findings

- The first area that we considered during the inspection was the quality of teaching, especially in helping disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Classrooms provide a calm and productive learning environment. Time is used well and relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Consequently, most pupils make strong progress in most subjects. Teachers generally plan lessons well, using information about pupils' abilities and other needs. They identify and prioritise disadvantaged pupils in their planning and teaching. As a result, although disadvantaged pupils continue to make slower progress than others in several subjects, the picture is improving. Their progress is accelerating and differences in rates of progress are diminishing. The attendance of a minority of disadvantaged pupils remains a concern. Although most disadvantaged pupils attend well, some fail to attend school sufficiently regularly.
- The inspection's second focus was on the key stage 4 curriculum and its impact on outcomes, especially for boys. By the end of Year 11, most pupils, including

boys, achieve high standards in the majority of subjects. Achievement is strong in several subjects, including English, mathematics, science, languages and food technology. Pupils' progress is weaker in some option subjects, including business studies, ICT and design and technology. These subjects have a disproportionately high number of boys taking them in key stage 4. Staffing and leadership issues in these subjects have, in recent years, led to some weak teaching and poor outcomes. Leaders' actions to stabilise staffing and strengthen leadership are proving effective and some improvement is now evident in these subjects.

- The school's curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects for pupils. Leaders have recently reduced the length of key stage 3 to two years. This gives pupils additional time to study for new, more rigorous, GCSE courses in key stage 4, which now spans Years 9 to 11. Pupils in Year 9 who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy working on their GCSE courses. Leaders place an emphasis on academic subjects. For example, a much higher proportion of pupils take GCSEs in languages than is typically seen in similar schools. Teaching is strong in languages and pupils achieve high standards at the end of Year 11.
- The third area we considered was the quality of care provided for vulnerable pupils. This is a strength of the school, with thoughtful leadership and expert governor scrutiny. For example, leaders ensure that children looked after are given high-quality emotional, pastoral and academic support. All members of staff contribute to this provision. Consequently, these pupils develop into confident young people as well as achieving good academic outcomes. Similarly, pupils with medical needs are well supported in school. All have up-to-date healthcare plans that are understood by staff. Governors were instrumental in strengthening the school's policy and practice for these pupils.
- The fourth focus area was the effectiveness of governance. A national leader of governance (NLG) conducted a review of governance in May 2016 and noted several weaknesses. The NLG conducted follow-up reviews in October 2016 and May 2017, supporting the governing body and its new chair in the intervening months. Over that period, governance improved considerably and is now effective. Following an audit of governors' skills, additional governors have been recruited with expertise in safeguarding, finance and education. Governors have undertaken training in several areas, including interpreting assessment information. Consequently, they are now able to challenge leaders more effectively about published data. Committee structures and terms of reference have been revised and these are now clear and support the improvements in the school well. Governors now know what the school is doing well and where there is need for improvement. They effectively hold leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The inspection's final focus area was the sixth form. Students make consistently good progress in the sixth form, especially in academic subjects. Their progress is a little slower in vocational subjects, but this is improving. All requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are met, with the range and quality of non-qualification activity being a particular strength. For example, students mentor younger pupils and readily take advantage of the wide array of sporting, arts and other activities on offer. Students told inspectors that they particularly value the

pastoral and academic support, including careers guidance, which teachers and other adults provide. Almost all students move on to education, employment or training when they leave the sixth form. The proportion of students who move on to university is well above that seen nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in option subjects, including business studies, ICT and design and technology, improves so that standards rise to match those evident in other subjects
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to accelerate and the number that are persistently absent reduces.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and other leaders. We visited several classes during the day with you, or other senior leaders, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We talked with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. I met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. We scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, reviews of governance and safeguarding, and child protection records. We considered 97 responses to Parent View, including 65 free-text comments and one email from a parent. We considered 62 responses from members of staff and 61 responses from pupils to their respective online inspection questionnaires.