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Miss Nicola Ross
Principal
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Dear Miss Ross

Short inspection of New College Worcester (NMSS)

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2019 with Linda McGill, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school provides a warm and welcoming environment. There is a lot of laughter and enjoyment in lessons and around the school. Pupils are happy in school. One commented: 'I just love it here.' Relationships between staff and adults are strong and this helps pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem.

You have been Principal for just over two years and, in that time, you have appointed three new subject leaders. In response to the increasing complexity of pupils' needs, you have also created a new post of assistant special educational needs coordinator. These appointments are helping to continue to improve the quality of education provided.

Staff morale is high. Staff value the support given to them by leaders, including the high profile given to staff training. All staff say they enjoy working at the school.

Governors have high expectations for pupils and for what the school can achieve. They are fully committed to improving outcomes for pupils, and they work collaboratively with leaders. For example, leaders and governors have an annual strategy day where they discuss the priorities for the school. As a result, a five-year school development plan has been written that accurately identifies the key areas for development for the school.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. They share your vision of the school: to have an appropriate balance between academic drive and nurture. All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the

school to a parent.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to look at how its assessment information could be used even better to help improve pupils' achievements. Systems for recording and evaluating assessment information are developing well. Leaders now have a clear view of progress and achievement for individual pupils from information about pupils' work. However, the lack of extensive external moderation of these judgements limits their reliability and validity.

The school was also asked to look at the level of difficulty of work set by teachers. Teachers plan lessons effectively to help pupils learn well. They have a good understanding of pupils' needs. All pupils say they are given challenging work and are encouraged to do their best. As a result, pupils are making good progress.

You were asked to make sure that pupils were studying the right qualifications for them to achieve their best. A review of the curriculum has resulted in the introduction of a number of vocational subjects which better meet the needs of the changing cohort of pupils. Consequently, last year all pupils at key stage 5 went on to appropriate education, employment or training.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. You ensure that all staff are well trained and understand and implement policies and procedures. The record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is meticulous. Concerns about pupils are carefully logged and appropriately detailed. Risk assessments for individual pupils are detailed and reviewed regularly. You follow up concerns in a timely manner and escalate them as necessary. Leaders regularly evaluate how well they have dealt with concerns and have sought advice from the local authority to improve their practice. As a result, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Through the curriculum, assemblies and form time, you teach pupils about e-safety and deliver relationships and sex education. Pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes are appropriately supervised. Staff provide an appropriate balance between supporting those who need it and encouraging others to take controlled risks. This is helping pupils to develop their independence.

Pupils feel safe. Staff and parents agree that they are safe.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils in key stage 3 follow the national curriculum and this provides pupils with a good foundation for their option choices in key stage 4.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questions effectively in order to check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. A range of resources are successfully used in lessons to meet pupils' needs. These include the use of braille, enlarged text and adaptive technology. As a result, pupils are able to access the curriculum and work independently.
- Changes to the curriculum offer from September 2018 have widened the choice

of options available to pupils in both key stages 4 and 5. Both academic and vocational accredited courses are offered in a wide range of subjects. However, leaders are constantly reviewing the curriculum to ensure that the subjects offered are those best suited to meet the pupils' changing needs. For example, in the future, leaders would like to offer small animal care as this would lead to additional opportunities for pupils in employment or training.

- The curriculum is rich and interesting. The focus on both academic progress and the wider curriculum is preparing pupils well for life-long learning. In every lesson, teachers' planning includes learner outcomes that are based around developing independence and resilience. There is a strong emphasis on nurturing individual pupils' interests and talents. For example, pupils have been helped to study languages such as Japanese and Russian. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- Pupils in all key stages have an enhanced curriculum. Activities are planned around the needs of the pupils. For example, new pupils to the school have mobility training to teach them how to find their way around the school building and surrounding outdoor space independently. As a pupil's independence and confidence grows, mobility training may extend to teaching that pupil how to travel independently on public transport. The skills taught during the school day are reinforced by care staff at the evenings and weekends. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders set aspirational but achievable targets for pupils' progress. Progress is effectively tracked on an individual basis through the use of a student support information tracker. This helps leaders to identify any additional barriers to learning and put targeted interventions into place. Interventions may include, for example, pupil premium funding being used to provide additional support in mathematics, meet the cost of a pupil's trip abroad or for counselling to support a pupil's mental health needs. Consequently, pupils in all groups are making good progress.
- Progress in music, English, modern foreign languages and art is particularly strong. This is supported by evidence in lessons and pupils' work. For example, pupils in music are able to use highly technical language when self-evaluating their work. Where progress is weaker, for example in mathematics, leaders have taken appropriate actions. However, while some improvement in pupils' progress in mathematics is beginning to show, it is too early to see the full impact of these actions.
- Pupils experience a wealth of activities, including trips abroad, residential camps and visits to the Houses of Parliament. The school offers an extensive extracurricular programme that includes sport, music and drama. Many pupils have represented their country in a range of adapted sports, for example goalball and rifle shooting.
- Pupils develop their leadership skills in a variety of ways. For example, they present assemblies, show visitors around the school, organise fundraising events and take the role of head boy or head girl. Having these responsibilities is helping the pupils develop into confident, articulate learners.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders increase the use of external moderation to add reliability and validity to teachers' judgements of pupils' work
- leaders continue to refine the curriculum to respond to the pupils' changing needs and ensure their needs are fully met.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Yates
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection my colleague and I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I met with several governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke to a parent on the telephone.

We carried out joint lesson observations with leaders, talked to pupils in lessons and looked at their work. We talked to many pupils about their learning and attitudes to, and opinions about, school. We observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.

We took account of 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including nine free-text responses. We also considered 25 staff and five pupils' responses to Ofsted's staff and pupils' questionnaires.

We looked at several documents, including the school's evaluation of performance, the school's development plan, pupils' records and several school policies. We also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.