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Mr Nick Bowen and Mrs Claire Huddart
Executive Principal and Principal
Horizon Community College
Dodworth Road
Barnsley
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Dear Mr Nick Bowen and Mrs Claire Huddart

Short inspection of Horizon Community College

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018 with Natasha Greenough and Janet Gabanski, 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 first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your strong and determined leadership has ensured that the school has continued to move forward since the previous inspection report. You have high expectations and are highly ambitious for the pupils in the school. Your self-evaluation is very accurate. You are justifiably proud of the achievements of your pupils, but very aware of the aspects of the school's work which need further improvement. Governors summed this up nicely when they talked of your 'keen antennae' for areas of school life which need attention. You are ably supported by your leadership team and a strong team of middle leaders, who clearly share your determination and vision for the school. You have a proven record of developing leaders at all levels, and the idea of leaders working in pairs has been highly effective.

Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are equally clear about the strengths of the school and its priorities, if you are to achieve your ambitious plans for the school. There is a nice blend of experienced governors and new recruits. Between them, they have a wide range of skills and experience, and effective training has enabled them to develop their skills further. They have a clear understanding of their role and there are systems in place which allow them both to support and challenge leaders. It was clear from conversations with them and governors' minutes that they have the skills, training and confidence to fulfil this role.

You expect high standards as regards behaviour. This initially led to a high rate of fixed-term exclusions, and this year for the first time you have had to permanently exclude some pupils. However, you have devised effective strategies to reduce considerably the number of exclusions and you are determined that this trend will continue. Pupils and staff appreciate the visible presence of senior staff about school throughout the day. The atmosphere in classrooms and about school is calm. Pupils show respect for each other and are courteous both to staff and visitors. They wear their uniform with pride.

The school is an inclusive community. Local authority staff talk positively about your willingness to accept students who have struggled to succeed in other secondary schools. You pride yourself on the pastoral support that you give to each and every one of your pupils. Each year group has its own Head of School and is run like a mini school within the college.

You have taken clear actions to respond to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report, as well as to other weaknesses you noted. You were asked to improve teaching and learning further and you have made that the cornerstone of your development plan. In addition to mathematics, mentioned specifically in the last report, you have also focused on humanities. There are clear signs of improvement, but you agree that these areas will need to remain a focus. Similarly, your stronger teachers are now using information about all your pupils skilfully to tailor work to their needs. However, you are aware of the importance of ensuring that all teachers reach the standard of your best teachers currently. You are the first to point out that there is still work to do to achieve that.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture in the school that sets the safety of pupils as a high priority. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leadership of this area is strong and there is a dedicated, well-trained team which supports vulnerable pupils. Staff in this team make referrals in a swift and timely fashion. They show persistence and determination in the way that they ensure that pupils get the help that they need in a timely fashion. Records are detailed and of a high quality.

Due to the training and the regular updates that they receive, staff understand their responsibilities and are vigilant. Leaders work closely with a wide range of external agencies in the community to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to keep the most vulnerable pupils safe. Governors are also well trained and review the school's systems regularly to check that they are fit for purpose.

Pupils also receive extensive training on potential dangers and, consequently, they can speak confidently about measures that they can take to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel safe and that they have confidence in school staff to help

them resolve any issues which arise.

Inspection findings

- There were many positives in the examination results of 2017. Overall, pupils made stronger progress than pupils nationally with the same starting points. Disadvantaged pupils also made stronger progress overall than their peers nationally. Progress was significantly above the national figure in English literature, business studies, physical education, religious education and photography.
- However, you are aware that there were still subject areas where progress was less strong, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those of high ability. School progress information shows current pupils making more rapid progress in those weaker areas than the Year 11 pupils who left in 2017. Inspection activities also showed this to be the case.
- You have rigorous systems in place to monitor attendance closely and support those who do not attend regularly. As a result, attendance overall was in line with the national figure in 2017. Figures for the present academic year show that attendance has improved slightly. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent was above the national figure in 2017. However, there has been an improvement on this aspect of attendance too, and the figure for this year so far is better than the national figure.
- The whole school numeracy strategy has clearly developed since the previous inspection. Inspectors saw how middle leaders in subjects like science are working with the mathematics leaders to ensure a common approach.
- Inspection activities showed that leaders had clearly responded to the area for improvement in the previous inspection report about catering for the needs of all pupils. In lesson observations, and through close scrutiny of pupils' work, inspectors did see examples of real challenge across the ability range, including for high-ability pupils. Furthermore, a group of high-ability pupils from across four year groups could give examples from across a range of subjects, where teachers provided the challenge that they need. However, they agreed with what inspectors saw in lessons and books, that this is not consistent across all teachers.
- You have been working with primary colleagues to avoid repetition from the primary curriculum and to ensure a rapid, purposeful start in Year 7. Inspectors saw examples of where this is clearly happening, but it is not yet firmly embedded. Your decision to pursue forming a multi-academy trust with a high-achieving primary school is designed to enhance this work.
- Pupils were positive about the way the school deals with bullying. However, there were a minority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, who did not feel that the school dealt effectively with bullying.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and humanities so that pupils make progress in those subjects at least in line with national figures
- they maintain the emphasis on setting work to suit the needs of all pupils so that all teachers set suitably challenging tasks, particularly for the most able pupils
- they continue their work with primary colleagues so that Year 7 pupils make rapid progress from the outset and build quickly on their primary experience.

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

Yours sincerely

David Pridding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors, a cross section of staff and two groups of pupils. I met with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors had conversations with pupils informally at social times. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting observations of learning and from scrutinising pupils' work jointly with your middle and senior leaders. The inspection team checked and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, attendance and behaviour information and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also checked the compliance of your school's website and reviewed the 145 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil or staff questionnaires.