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Mrs Christine Stansfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stansfield

Short inspection of John Ferneley College

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2018 with Jenny Brown, Ofsted Inspector, and Ash Rahman, 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2015.

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 is part of the Mowbray Education Trust, which incorporates several local feeder primary schools. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. Pupils behave well and enjoy learning. They welcome the high expectations and the level of challenge they experience in lessons. Pupils feel safe in the school and appreciate the opportunities they have to learn how to keep themselves safe.

You and other leaders know your school well. Your detailed evaluation of examination outcomes and of the quality of teaching enables you to identify accurately the school's strengths and areas to improve further. Leaders have high aspirations for pupils and recognise the importance of a rigorous education to improve pupils' life-chances. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged. A greater proportion of pupils now study a foreign language and humanities subjects than previously. A history 'core' course is provided to engage some pupils in a more demanding curriculum. This has enabled them to develop their learning skills and gain a qualification that they value. Pupils appreciate the curriculum choices they have. However, they expressed to inspectors that they would welcome more guidance and information about planning for the next steps in their education and about career choices.

Governors have an accurate knowledge of the school and challenge leaders appropriately. They share your passion for improving social mobility in the town and recognise that improvements in the school are intended to be sustainable and in the best interests of the community. They ensure that leaders' actions are bringing about the intended improvements and that they are of benefit to all pupils. Governors make use of external support to enable them to develop their detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The structure and remit of the trust board and of the local governing body of the school have undergone significant change in recent months. Governors now feel that they are well placed to support leaders in improving the school further in the next phase of its development.

The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Leaders have a clear knowledge of where behaviour is less well managed and intervene to make improvements. They respond quickly to concerns as they arise so that learning can continue uninterrupted. Training is available to teachers to support them in improving their skills to challenge inappropriate behaviour more effectively.

Rates of attendance are better than national averages. A small number of pupils, for whom mainstream education is not appropriate, receive their education from Melton Behaviour Partnership. Leaders track carefully those pupils who leave the school roll to ensure that they are able to continue their education in another establishment. Some parents and carers feel that the school provides well for pupils who have medical conditions, special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, a small minority of parents expressed the view that some pupils' needs are not met effectively.

Most pupils take a high level of pride in their work and use feedback from their teachers to help them to progress. This is not yet consistent, however. Sometimes feedback is less clear and pupils do not make effective use of comments from teachers to help them address gaps in their learning. Some exercise books are less well presented and show a lack of care.

The previous inspection highlighted the need for leaders to improve teaching and achievement, particularly in mathematics and history. Senior leaders have focused on appointing high-quality teachers and middle leaders to the school to increase the capacity to improve teaching. This has enabled improvements to the quality of teaching to be made. It is now of a very high standard in most areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' overall progress in many subjects is significantly better than that of most pupils nationally. Where outcomes are not yet of the same high level, leaders have appointed new staff to lead improvements, for example in mathematics and science. A number of specialist leaders in education have been accredited to support these improvements. Leaders recognise the need to retain high-quality staff and have taken steps to ensure that leaders and teachers have appropriately high levels of autonomy. You have also considered the workload of staff to ensure that they use their time effectively for the benefit of pupils. Teachers enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by leaders.

During the inspection, inspectors noted examples of teachers challenging pupils effectively to develop their understanding. In history, pupils were able to show good recall of facts they had learned and to develop their skills in extended writing. Careful sequencing of learning and use of excellent knowledge by teachers contribute to excellent outcomes in some subjects. In other subjects, inspectors observed that pupils' progress was less rapid because the sequence of learning was less well considered. Inspectors also saw examples of teachers checking pupils' understanding of their learning carefully. This enabled the teachers to modify their approach to improve pupils' learning. This is not yet consistently effective across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You take your responsibility for safeguarding of pupils very seriously. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities regarding the safeguarding of pupils. They receive regular briefings to alert them to potential risks in society. They are clear about the procedures to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. The necessary checks for appointing staff are in place and appropriate records are kept.

The safeguarding team monitors pupils about whom they have concerns. Regular reviews of open cases are held so that staff can keep a close eye on pupils they are worried about.

Pupils feel safe and are confident that there are staff that they can speak with if they need help. They value the positive relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils value the teaching they receive about diversity and mental health. They are taught how to ensure that they stay safe and understand many of the challenges facing them in the world outside school. Pupils said that they feel that any bullying is dealt with effectively. However, a minority of parents feel that not all cases of bullying are dealt with effectively by the school.

Governors are clear about their responsibility for holding leaders to account for safeguarding and have carried out an audit of safeguarding arrangements. They check to ensure that all staff are subject to the necessary checks when appointed and that they are regularly trained. Governors with specific responsibility for safeguarding receive training and support with governors from other schools in the trust.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have addressed the weaknesses in outcomes for pupils in 2017 examination results. They have improved the quality of teaching and increased the capacity of leadership in the school. Provisional information for 2018 suggests that pupils' progress is significantly better than average in many areas of the curriculum and broadly in line with national averages in some, including mathematics. The quality of teaching in mathematics has begun to improve. Leaders have strategies in place to address the remaining areas of relative under

performance. However, development plans do not always show clearly the purpose of chosen actions and how success will be evaluated.

- Strategies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils are effective and their attendance is improving. The proportion of these pupils who are persistently absent from school has significantly reduced, compared with previous years. The progress of these pupils is starting to catch up with that of their peers in most year groups.
- Leaders have reflected on previous decisions about the curriculum. They have brought about changes that have ensured that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are challenged. Pupils are now working towards qualifications to improve their life-chances.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategic development plans show clearly the purpose of actions being undertaken and how success will be evaluated
- they continue to improve the quality of teaching so that all teaching is as effective as the best
- all pupils have enough information and guidance about the next steps in their education and about career choices.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Colling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders and other staff. Further discussions were held with chair of the Melton Education Trust board and the chair of the local governing body of the school. Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils and spoke informally with others around the site and in lessons. Jointly with school leaders, inspectors observed learning in a variety of subjects and looked at the work in pupils' books. A range of documentation was considered, including the school development plan, evidence of senior leaders' self-evaluation, data relating to current pupils' progress and the school's own analysis of examination outcomes for the previous year. Records of attendance and behaviour and minutes of governing body and trust board meetings were examined. Inspectors took into account the 94 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and the 52 responses to the staff survey and 89 responses to the pupils' survey.