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Mr Neil Gallagher  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Gallagher

### **Short inspection of Clacton County High School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspectors Lynn Ayling and Nicola Hood, 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 March 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has improved steadily. For example, in 2016, pupils' progress from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4 was in the top 1% in the country. In 2017, pupils' progress was well above average for pupils of all abilities and all groups, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils begin Year 7 with attainment that is consistently below average and end Year 11 attaining above-average results in their best eight subjects (Attainment 8). In the sixth form, students' progress is very strong on academic courses and exceptional on vocational courses.

#### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders are acutely aware of the safety and welfare needs of their pupils. Staff are diligent in ensuring that secure arrangements for child protection are in place. All statutory requirements are met. Governors make regular checks to monitor training, patterns in child protection cases and caseload for relevant staff.

Most importantly, pupils say that they feel safe. They cite as a key strength of the school the fact that teachers know them as individuals and are concerned about any personal matters that may affect their learning in lessons. Pupils also told inspectors that 'you can be an individual'.

Leaders have taken, at times, unpopular decisions to protect pupils. For example, the decision to keep pupils on-site at lunchtime was prompted, not by concerns regarding behaviour, but rather by considering their safety. All parents and carers responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child is safe and happy in school. Very nearly all agree that their child is well looked after.

## **Inspection findings**

- We pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remains good. The first was to check how well 16 to 19 study programmes in the sixth form are implemented. Students' outcomes in the sixth form have improved strongly since the previous inspection. Students do very well in academic courses, making better-than-average progress. On vocational courses, their progress is even stronger. Students are well aware of employment and apprenticeship opportunities, although most of the students to whom I spoke were seeking places at prestigious universities.
- The school's engagement with the VI6 collaboration of local sixth forms hosted at the University of Essex enables students to have a wide choice of A-level and vocational options. All students do work experience in Year 12. This meets the government requirements, but would be even better if more employers were involved to enable a better match of placements to students' aspirations and interests.
- The pre-apprenticeship course supports level 2 students well. English and mathematics GCSE retake results show that pupils are making positive progress and compare favourably with results nationally. Personal, health, social and economic learning is delivered through what the school calls 'real days'. These, together with assemblies, prepare students for life in modern Britain and the extended project qualification allows many students to investigate ethical and moral issues. Students are overwhelmingly positive about the sixth form, especially the support they receive from their teachers, both in and out of lessons. Leaders appreciate that the new timetabling arrangements mean that studying the same subject for the whole day is not ideal and that it is difficult to provide sport and leisure opportunities in the sixth form.
- My next line of enquiry was around whether the school's curriculum enables pupils to receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced education. I was interested to check the impact of the three-year key stage 4. At this school, the three-year key stage 4 is long established. Leaders are able to articulate a clear rationale for this. They have adapted the key stage 3 timetable, planning the curriculum well to ensure coverage and depth of subjects. As a result, at key stage 4, the uptake and quality of work in subjects like art, music and drama are strong. Inspectors checked that pupils' progress in vocational subjects results from highly effective teaching. This was apparent from the work in pupils' books.

- There is well-planned religious education (RE) covering the locally agreed syllabus, ensuring some appreciation of other faiths and cultures in modern Britain. This is delivered through the 'real days' and the popularity of GCSE RE is increasing. Pupils are aware of the concept of fundamental British values and are familiar with the phrase, but find it difficult to translate into examples of what these values mean in practice. Governors are very clear that pupils should have every opportunity to excel in subjects for which they have a passion. Pupils are positive about the curriculum and the amount of choice. Their reservation is that they would like more preparation for life, for example through financial education.
- In 2016, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was below that of other pupils, and the persistent absence of pupils in these groups was above average. The school's overall attendance remains above average. Leaders have in place a persistent absence plan which is leading to some improvement. For example, there has been improvement in the persistent absence of pupils entitled to free school meals this year.
- My next enquiry was around behaviour and how well pupils are looked after. We observed behaviour around the school and in lessons. We watched pupils arrive and leave and watched them in the canteen. We concluded that we had seen confident self-assured learners who have excellent attitudes to their learning and want to do well. This is reflected in their work. Pupils benefit from high-quality and impartial careers guidance, leading to pupils taking appropriate courses. The proportion of the school's pupils who leave at 16 or 18 and are not in education, employment or training is very low. Bullying is rare and any instances are dealt with effectively. Pupils are confident that the school has strong and effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online. We investigated why a number of pupils had left the school between the start of Year 10 and the end of Year 11. We found that the school had an explanation for each case.
- Finally, we checked why, within the overall positive picture of pupils' progress, pupils achieve better in some subjects than in others. Some subjects do especially well because they meet the needs and interests of pupils particularly well. Leaders are aware of rare instances of less effective teaching and are working with staff effectively to improve teaching. Last year, there was a dip in English outcomes, partly explained by teachers' lack of sufficient familiarity with the new GCSE course. The multi-academy trust is working with the English department on a range of strategies, for example choosing texts that engage boys. As a result, English progress for current pupils is improving.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on current work to promote fundamental British values and prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by making clearer links to pupils' everyday experiences
- they further develop the 16 to 19 study programmes so that work-related learning is more closely matched to students' career interests and aspirations.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors. During the inspection, we met with you, teachers and other staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and three groups of pupils. We visited most classes to observe teaching and check behaviour. We looked at pupils' books to see progress in pupils' work across a range of subjects. We observed pupils around the school and in social areas. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record. We also considered the 118 responses to Parent View. Owing to the power failure in the school in the period between the inspection announcement and the inspection, no staff or pupil questionnaires were received.