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Dear Mr George

Short inspection of The South Wolds Academy & Sixth Form

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2016 with Azizah Pathan, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the senior leadership team have brought about significant improvements as a result of your determination to realise the potential for every child in the school. Staff value the clear direction and excellent support provided by leaders. You enjoy high levels of support from staff, pupils and parents. Pupils in the school are in no doubt that teachers care about their well-being and their future. One pupil remarked, 'I am so impressed with how far I have come since Year 7.' Pupils appreciate the culture of high aspiration which is set within a foundation of care and support. Leaders are acutely aware of the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress and thrive in the school's inclusive environment.

Despite receiving a very favourable report at the last inspection, you have not rested on your laurels. You recognised that in order for the school to be successful key areas would need to be improved quickly, especially in relation to pupils' progress and achievement in the sixth form. Pupils' attainment and progress have improved over the last three years. Pupils' progress in most key subjects is above average. The proportion of pupils making expected progress in English and mathematics is above the national average, although the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress (the target set for all pupils) is not as high as it could be. Although examination results in science in 2015 were disappointing,

progress and attainment are improving this year as a result of the support you are providing for teaching and leadership in this department. You recognise the need to continue this support in order to secure sustained improvements and improve consistency in the quality of teaching in science across the school. The sixth form is now a significant strength of the school. Students are very successful in the courses they follow; they enjoy their studies and make good progress. Leaders of the sixth form have developed effective study programmes which meet the needs and aspirations of students. All students leave the sixth form at appropriate education, employment or training destinations. Leaders are committed to further improving the retention and recruitment rates for certain minority groups of students.

Pupils' behaviour is mostly good. The vast majority display positive attitudes to their learning and towards each other. Staff promote good relationships and respectful behaviour well. The levels of attendance and rates of exclusions have improved year on year; both are better than national averages. Leaders' work to improve the attendance of those who are more persistently absent is making a positive difference. The behaviour of a small group of boys, who had a previous track record of poor behaviour, is also improving quickly. This is because year performance leaders and the inclusion support team have worked closely with individuals and their families to support the boys' needs and moderate their behaviour. Some staff and pupils report that not all staff follow the behaviour policy consistently, and this contributes to low-level disruption in a few lessons, although inspectors did not witness this behaviour during observations.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have put together a comprehensive policy to safeguard pupils. Training for all staff and statutory duties have been carried out rigorously. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is experienced and knowledgeable in child protection matters. In addition, he has an acute understanding of the specific needs of vulnerable pupils in the school and makes appropriate provision to ensure their safety and well-being. He is supported well by a strong team of support staff. The DSL rigorously monitors all referrals and is tenacious in ensuring that appropriate professionals are engaged with each case. Pupils and parents are regularly reminded about how to keep safe through information presented at parents evenings, newsletters, pupils' planners and assemblies. Pupils say they feel safe and teachers listen to their concerns and worries. When there are incidents of bullying, teachers support the victims sensitively and work with the perpetrator to improve their attitudes and behaviour. Leaders understand the need to combat prejudiced-based bullying in the school further through ongoing teaching and awareness-raising activities. Leaders have devised an effective programme of lessons and assemblies to raise awareness about the common risks facing teenagers. The topics include: the dangers of child sexual exploitation, self-harming, drug misuse, online safety and extremism.

Inspection findings

- You have reviewed the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. Leaders share your commitment to raise expectations and improve

outcomes for all pupils. You and subject leaders have devised effective plans to address the key weaknesses. Actions taken so far are already making a difference. For example, there is improved pupils' progress in science and improved attendance of those who were previously regularly absent from school.

- Governors have improved the effectiveness of their work over the last few years. Fewer committees, experienced new members and more sharply focused regular meetings have enabled the governing body to hold leaders to account more effectively. Governors have worked well with you to keep sound financial oversight of the school, despite very challenging circumstances.
- Subject performance leaders are improving their role and effectiveness. They carry out their quality assurance and monitoring duties regularly and work well with the senior leadership team to advance key priorities. Most subjects' examination results, including those in the sixth form, compare well with national averages.
- The school has benefited from being part of a multi-academy trust since it joined in September. The East Midlands Education Trust (EMET) has provided specialist support for the special educational needs department and subject leaders have shared practice with fellow leaders from the family of schools within the trust. The trust has complete confidence in your leadership capacity.
- Teaching has improved across the school, including in the sixth form, because leaders have developed a comprehensive system of professional development for teachers' specific needs. Staff praise the wide-ranging development pathways provided for them. Teachers are supported well to improve. The school's effective performance management arrangements and expectations have helped to reinforce accountability.
- The school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability is improving. The newly recruited special educational needs coordinator from EMET is knowledgeable and committed to improving the progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability. The inclusion manager works hard to ensure that day-to-day provision for vulnerable pupils is supportive and effective. Leaders have a keen understanding of the potential risks in the local community and work well with pupils to prevent and moderate risky behaviours.
- Leaders use additional funding well to support disadvantaged pupils, including those who require additional support to catch up with their peers. The 'closing the gaps' meetings, which are held regularly by leaders, ensure that disadvantaged pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Intervention is carried out earlier as a result, and is becoming much more effective. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally is closing in both English and mathematics. Leaders rigorously evaluate the strategies to support targeted pupils to ensure value for money.
- The personal, social and health curriculum is well developed across the school, including the sixth form. Tutors help pupils to consider issues arising from current affairs and help them to manage their feelings through mentoring and mindfulness sessions. Students in the sixth form help to

mentor younger pupils. The school's careers programme is wide-ranging. Guest speakers, work experience and visits to local colleges and universities help pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make informed choices about their future education and career choices. The school has been recognised by a national business quality mark awarding body for the work it does to support careers, information, advice and guidance. Pupils appreciate the wide-ranging extra-curricular opportunities on offer for them such as chef club and the various sporting activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and leadership in science are sustained and secure good progress for all pupils across the school
- the behaviour policy is consistently applied
- the proportion of pupils achieving more than expected progress is increased further.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team, the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of EMET, the sixth-form leader, the designated safeguarding leader and subject performance leaders for key subjects. The team inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator, year performance leaders and other senior leaders. Inspectors visited a range of lessons across the main school and the sixth form. Some observations of teaching were jointly undertaken with senior leaders. We also observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break and lunchtimes, and during lessons. Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils. Inspectors considered the views of 140 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 76 free text responses. We also took account of the views of 111 pupils and 53 staff. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised. In addition, we considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, pupil performance information, performance management and safeguarding records and policies.