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Mr Andrew Bull
Headteacher
London Nautical School
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Dear Mr Bull

Short inspection of London Nautical School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 2018 with Catherine Davies, 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 April 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You were appointed as the permanent headteacher of the school in September 2016. This was after the appointment of an interim headteacher, following the previous postholder leaving during the 2014/15 academic year. The governors identified a decline in key aspects of the school's effectiveness during this period, due to the significant instability in the leadership of the school. This led to rapid deterioration in the school's performance, including pupils' behaviour, learning and progress. As a result, 2016 and 2017 overall progress measures for Year 11 pupils were significantly below the national average.

Since your appointment, you have been well supported by the governing body and the local authority's school improvement adviser. This has helped to drive forward a number of improvements to stem the decline. You immediately introduced a new whole-school behaviour policy which focuses on developing positive attitudes to learning. Additionally, you appointed new senior and middle leaders to increase leadership capacity. Leaders are now in a better position than previously to implement the priorities in the school improvement plan and to hold staff accountable for their work. Recently you appointed a number of subject leaders to associate assistant headteacher posts. Their role is to support your senior leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Your self-evaluation rightly identifies the next improvement priorities for the school. You plan to highlight these through the theme of 'Raising Standards Through...'. For example, improvement 'through' the actions taken by leaders, managers and governors to fulfil their roles. This reflects your aspiration to quickly improve pupils' outcomes. Parents and carers, governors and most staff are encouraged by, and supportive of, the changes that you are making to improve pupils' learning and their school experience.

However, these changes are not fully embedded and you and your governors agree with this. Currently, inconsistencies remain in both how teachers work and pupils progress in a range of subjects. Likewise, a number of teachers are not successfully using the school's behaviour procedures appropriately. This means internal and external exclusions, although declining, remain too high. This finding aligns with a significant number of pupils' views and parents' comments.

The changes that you are making are beginning to improve pupils' learning and progress. However, your analysis of the current Year 11 assessment information indicates that they have not made strong progress since joining the school. This means that their progress is unlikely to match that of pupils with similar starting points nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet current requirements. They, alongside teachers, promote a strong culture of safeguarding, which permeates the school. As a result, pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe and well looked after. Most parents who responded to the school's and Ofsted's surveys agree. Leaders make sure staff and governors are trained and receive regular updates in safeguarding.

The systems in place to check the suitability of all staff to work with children are rigorous. Any concerns about pupils are carefully monitored and written records provide evidence of very quick follow-up action. Senior leaders have developed partnerships with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive early help if this is required. Leaders, governors and trustees keep all safeguarding matters under review so that improvements can be implemented rapidly.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, we agreed to look at how teachers use pupil assessment information to plan learning activities which precisely match pupils' different abilities. This was an area for improvement identified during the school's last inspection.
- Visits to classrooms and reviews of pupils' work confirmed that this aspect is inconsistent. Teaching and learning activities sometimes do and sometimes do not sufficiently challenge pupils with different prior attainment, especially those with middle and high starting points. This was seen across and within different subjects.

- Some teachers are still not adhering to the leaders' expectations of how teaching and learning should be planned and delivered across the school. As a result, pupils' progress over time varies depending on their subject teacher.
- The second line of enquiry was also noted as an area to improve in the school's last Ofsted inspection. This was to look at how effectively all members of staff consistently implement the school's policy when managing pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils behaved well in the lessons visited during the inspection. Pupils' books showed that, typically, attitudes to learning are good. However, although falling, the number of internal exclusions for pupils' poor behaviour and attitudes remains very high. Furthermore, the number of repeat and fixed-term external exclusions overall are much higher than the latest national figures for all pupils.
- A number of parents and staff raised concerns about pupils' behaviour in lessons. Pupils said that their behaviour in lessons is sometimes not good, because some teachers do not implement the school's behaviour policy effectively. It is clear that there is still improvement needed in this aspect of the school's work.
- Finally, we agreed to consider the impact of leaders' actions to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in Years 7 to 11. This was because the progress measure for this group was markedly lower than national figures in both 2016 and 2017.
- Findings from visits to classrooms and the school's analysis of assessment information show that disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving across a range of subjects, especially in Years 7 to 9. Furthermore, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is better in the current Year 10 compared to the current Year 11. This confirms the positive impact of the actions that you are taking to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders have identified the next steps required to improve disadvantaged pupils' learning in lessons through a focused 'pupil pursuit' to consider the impact of the strategies used to date. The findings will be used to inform the whole-school intervention strategy to further improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use pupil performance information effectively so those with middle and high starting points learn well and make strong progress between Years 7 to 11
- ensure that staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and further reduce the rate of fixed-term exclusion, particularly for pupils who are excluded more than once
- disadvantaged pupils make strong progress between Years 7 to 11 so that their progress at least matches others with similar starting points nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Pamela Fearnley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held meetings with you and members of your senior leadership team. We had discussions with various senior and middle leaders, including the leader responsible for safeguarding and the local authority officer linked to your school. I interviewed members of the governing body and an inspector met with a small group of Year 7 to 10 pupils selected by the school. Informal conversations with pupils also took place. Short visits were made to a range of Year 7 to 10 classes in a variety of subjects to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work, jointly with you or with a member of your senior leadership team. Inspectors visited the learning support centre and considered a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's self-evaluation, records relating to safeguarding and an analysis of disadvantaged pupils' progress. We considered the school's recent survey to gather the views of parents and parents' letters addressed to inspectors. We held discussions with parents by telephone and at face-to-face meetings. We scrutinised responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.