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Mr Nigel Griffiths
Headteacher
John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy
Ledbury Road
Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire
HR9 7ET

Dear Mr Griffiths

Short inspection of John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Nicola Walters, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know the school well, including its many strengths and few weaknesses. Supported by strong senior leaders and an effective board of trustees, you tackle weaknesses quickly. You are never complacent, but are determined that the school should continue to improve.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They have high expectations of pupils and they consistently model respectful behaviour. Consequently, relationships are strong. Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly. Because of excellent attitudes to learning and strong academic results, pupils are very well prepared for life after school. You are successful in your aim to develop young people who are 'happy, healthy and successful'.

Parents value the education that the school provides and John Kyrle is the school of choice for an increasing number. The great majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Parents and students particularly value the school's successful and high-performing sixth form. One parent wrote:

'My son joined in the sixth form but instantly felt at home there and had

confidence in the teachers. Staff are very supportive and understanding. An excellent sixth form – thank you.'

At the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with sustaining the progress of pupils who join the school with weak basic skills and continuing to improve the quality of teaching, particularly of modern foreign languages.

Leaders identify pupils who have weaknesses in literacy or numeracy as they move to the school in Year 7. A thorough and well-planned programme, including some extraction from other subjects, helps these pupils to catch up with their peers. For example, regular reading sessions, with phonics teaching for pupils who need it, see pupils make rapid progress in the first few months of Year 7.

You have successfully maintained effective teaching across most of the school. Regular checks and decisive action to tackle any weaknesses have ensured that this is the case. The relatively new leadership of modern foreign languages has resulted in an improving picture. Schemes of learning are better planned and teachers have a better focus on pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are now making better progress. However, there remains some unevenness in the quality of teaching of modern foreign languages, for example in teachers' use of the target language to model pronunciation to pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff make keeping pupils safe your top priority, describing it as 'job number one'. All staff are well trained and alert to potential danger signs. Consequently, members of staff readily pass on any concerns they have about pupils, confident that leaders will deal with referrals speedily and appropriately.

Leadership of this area is meticulous. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed, of high quality and stored securely. Policies, procedures and systems are effective and well understood by staff. Recruitment checks, made as staff join the school, are thorough. Trustees regularly check that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Almost all parents who completed Parent View said that pupils are safe in school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and dealt with well by adults. Pupils are regularly reminded about the unacceptability of bullying and they have confidence in the school's adults to deal with any that does happen.

Inspection findings

- Pupils make good progress in the school. In 2016, pupils who had joined the school with standards below those seen nationally left having achieved standards above national averages. For example, 68% of pupils achieved GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A* to C and 31% achieved the English Baccalaureate. Both figures are above the national average. Standards are highest in

mathematics, science and the humanities. They are lower in modern foreign languages and variable in English. After strong GCSE English results in 2015, there were some disappointing results in 2016, especially for the most able boys.

- Leaders' concerted efforts to address the weaknesses in the most able boys' progress in English have proved successful. There has been a particular focus on encouraging pupils to better structure their ideas and judiciously choose quotations to support their views. Consequently, pupils' writing is improving, especially that of boys. The school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that the most able boys are now making strong progress.
- Over recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made slower progress than others across most subjects. However, stronger leadership over the past two years has seen disadvantaged pupils' progress improve. Teachers now have high expectations of disadvantaged pupils and they prioritise them when planning lessons and giving feedback. Leaders evaluate well the extra help that pupils are given. Strategies that do not prove effective are discarded or amended. Consequently, extra support is well targeted to where it is most needed and it is having an increasing impact. Teachers' assessments of current pupils' progress confirm a continuing trajectory of improvement for disadvantaged pupils.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low in recent years. Swifter analysis of data, combined with more effective work with parents this year, is having an impact. The attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils have improved considerably since September 2016. Consequently, the difference between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing. However, the figure still lags behind that for other pupils, both in school and nationally.
- Pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan receive high-quality support. A strong focus on maximising pupils' academic progress, while providing care and nurture, is seeing these pupils thrive. 'Student support plans' provide teachers with concise information about each pupil's particular needs, as well as specific guidance about how to cater for these needs in class. Teaching assistants skilfully support pupils in lessons, providing just the right amount of support to ensure that they can tackle their work without relying on external help.
- The school has several children looked after. Staff know and care for these children well. They provide bespoke support to address their particular needs. Leaders carefully monitor these pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress, intervening when necessary. Personal education plans are complete and detailed, and pupil premium funding is used effectively to promote their progress. Leaders provide trustees with regular reports about how children looked after are doing in school. Most are making good progress from their starting points.
- The school's curriculum is unusual in that it does not provide pupils with the opportunity to take separate GCSEs in physics, chemistry and biology in key stage 4. Instead, all pupils take GCSEs in core science and additional science, which include elements of the separate science subjects. Inspectors found no compelling evidence to suggest that this leadership decision has a negative effect

on the number of pupils opting to take physics, chemistry or biology in the sixth form. Neither did inspectors find any evidence that it affects sixth-form students' achievement in these subjects or their progression onto university courses.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- All teaching of modern foreign languages is of the same high quality as the best in the school.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve so that it matches the attendance of other pupils nationally.

I am copying this letter to the joint chairs of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leadership team and other members of staff who have leadership responsibilities. Accompanied by senior leaders, we visited several classes during the day, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We talked with many pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtime. We listened to pupils read and talked to them about reading and the books they enjoy. I met with five representatives of the board of trustees, including one of the joint chairs. We scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation and safeguarding and child protection records. We considered 100 responses to Parent View and an email from a parent. We also considered three pupil and 101 staff responses to their respective online inspection questionnaires.