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Mr Jim Wade
Principal
The JCB Academy
Mill Street
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Dear Mr Wade

Short inspection of The JCB Academy

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 2018, with Victor Reid, Her Majesty's 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection, standards have continued to improve. Pupils at key stage 4 make strong progress in a range of subjects from their low starting points. Outcomes in 2018, for example, showed further improved outcomes, particularly in English and mathematics.

You and your senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, and your self-evaluation is accurate. You and your governors are reflective of your own practices, and you strive to improve further the educational provision that you provide.

You and your leadership team, some of whom are new to role, have enhanced the use and analysis of pupil tracking data to monitor closely and drive up standards of pupils' progress and achievement. This has had a positive impact on the pace of change, and there has been greater accuracy of the monitoring of pupils' progress. It enables you to take swift and decisive actions where performance is not in line with your high expectations. As a result, pupils achieve strong outcomes.

You have addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection effectively. As a result, middle leaders now form a strong group of professionals within the school, and they support you and your leaders to drive further school improvements. Furthermore, pupils now receive feedback that aids their learning

and skill acquisition. Consequently, they make better progress.

Pupils arrive at your school from a wide range of settings. Approximately 47 schools feed into your school. A good proportion of pupils come to the school with behaviour and/or engagement issues, having been previously disengaged from their education. You are highly successful in reintegrating these pupils back into their education and, as a result, they achieve good outcomes and complete the phase of their education.

You and governors, who are a dedicated group of professionals that bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the school, originally created the school to improve the life chances for your pupils. You are highly successful in this aim. Pupils leave the school to a wide range of appropriate destinations. They benefit from the school's close link with a wide range of highly prestigious business partners, for example Rolls Royce, Bentley, Jaguar Land Rover, JCB and Toyota. Pupils move into a range of opportunities within these businesses and thrive. Your joint vision to be a school with a strong reputation for educating the next generation of highly skilled engineers has become a reality. For instance, a number of previous pupils from the school have gone on to win regional and national apprenticeship awards.

The specialist engineering facilities at your school continue to be of a high standard. This enables pupils to develop and hone their vocational skills and confidence in such areas as machining, turning, welding and fabrication and computer-aided design. Pupils benefit from and train on modern industrial machinery and equipment that replicate those in industry, enabling them to develop complex skills that allow them to produce work to exacting standards. This prepares them well for their future careers in engineering, for example.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They present themselves as self-assured, mature, polite and friendly learners. Pupils show respect to each other and adults as they move around the school in an orderly and calm manner. Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly strong, and teachers know their pupils well.

Attainment in the sixth form has historically been relatively weak and remained below national averages for 2017 and 2018, particularly in mathematics. However, students achieved better outcomes in the school's specialist subjects of engineering and business. Since the previous inspection, you have strengthened leadership roles and responsibilities within the sixth form, with a clear focus on both identifying and addressing the underlining reasons associated with this underperformance and to raise standards quickly. Although improving, inconsistencies in standards remain. You and your leaders have devised a new sixth-form curriculum. Now students take courses that are more closely matched to their abilities, needs and future career aspirations. However, it is too soon to see the impact of the new curriculum on students' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that all staff are aware of their responsibility to be vigilant on safeguarding. There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Staff have regular and focused child protection training, paired with regular updates so that they are aware of pertinent issues, including local and new priorities such as right-wing extremism. Consequently, staff fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. Staff are clear about who to refer any concerns on to, and leaders deal with referrals appropriately, drawing on external agencies when the need arises.

Pupils are and feel safe at school. Those who spoke to us expressed a sound understanding of ways to keep themselves safe, including from online dangers. Pupils are confident that staff would deal effectively with any bullying, or other problems which they might experience. Pupils are very complimentary about the pastoral support that they receive when they need it.

In specialist areas of the school, staff ensure that pupils are supported to develop quickly and to routinely follow safe working practices, for example wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and undertaking vital safety checks on engineering equipment such as lathes and milling machines prior to their use. Method statements and risk assessments are sufficiently detailed and informative, setting out precisely how teachers promote a culture of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Teaching is strong in key stage 4. Pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge and passion for their subjects. Regular feedback underpins learning and aids pupils' skills acquisition. Teachers know their pupils well and track effectively how well they are achieving. As a result, interventions are timely and swift. Relationships are strong and pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Monitoring of teachers' performance is regular, rigorous and insightful. Because of this, you have an accurate and informed view as to the strengths and weaknesses in each teacher's practice. Professional development has been strengthened so that teachers benefit from and are supported to further develop their teaching skills and practices.
- All staff have high aspirations and expectations of pupils, and you benchmark effectively pupils' attainment on entry to the school to establish their actual starting points. Consequently, you gain the knowledge to track and monitor their progress effectively. Regular and appropriate assessments inform you and your leaders about how well current pupils at the school are doing, allowing you to intervene swiftly when any gaps in learning are identified. This practice is a strength.
- Attainment in the sixth form has been relatively weak and continues to be less strong than that achieved by pupils in key stage 4. Outcomes in the school's specialist subjects, business and engineering, were stronger and students made better progress. Although improving, inconsistencies in standards and teaching remain, especially in mathematics. Following a detailed review of the school's

sixth-form curriculum and how it meets students' needs, you took an informed decision to redesign the curriculum. As a result, the number of students who undertake individualised programmes of study consisting of more than three A-Level equivalents has reduced sharply from 62% in 2016/17 to 6% in 2017/18. Furthermore, you have ensured that students continue to benefit from a distinctive and well-considered curriculum, consisting of three pathways, covering engineering, business and academic specialisms. These align well with students' abilities and needs, as well as identified local and regional skill priorities. However, it is too soon to see the impact of the new and improved curriculum on students' outcomes.

- The school provides highly effective careers advice and guidance for all pupils. Leaders continue to successfully ensure that there is a sharp focus on preparing pupils for the next stage of education, training or employment. Pupils value the helpful and independent advice and guidance that they receive throughout their school journey. For example, all pupils in Years 10, 11 and 12 complete work experiences and work-related learning placements as part of their study programme. These placements enhance and extend their understanding of the world of work and the potential range of career pathways available to them. All students who leave the sixth form progress to a range of positive destinations. Strong links with local universities and prestigious employers have supported pupils' increasing aspirations. As a result, pupils and students who leave the school progress successfully on to apprenticeships, including higher-level, advanced-level and degree-level apprenticeships, or take up places at a range of universities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater number of students in the sixth form make the progress of which they are capable, especially in mathematics
- the strong teaching practices and analytical expertise that exist in key stage 4 are transferred and utilised to further improve the 16 to 19 programme of study.

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

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, members of the senior leadership team and three governors, including the chair. We met formally and informally with pupils and sixth formers. We visited several classes with senior leaders and spoke with learners about their work. We scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding and child protection records, external review documents and achievement information. Parents' views were considered through the 91 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Staff's views were considered through the 63 responses to the online questionnaire. There were no responses from pupils to consider from their online inspection questionnaire.