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Mrs Claudia Cubbage
Principal
The Henry Cort Community College
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Dear Mrs Cubbage

Short inspection of The Henry Cort Community College

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 2018 with Chris Lee, 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 February 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 your appointment as principal you have provided a sharp focus to identifying and addressing areas of the school which need improvement. You and your leadership team have an uncompromising attitude towards raising standards and you have worked with determination and resolve to ensure that your changes are sustained. You are not complacent and realise that initiatives need to be fully embedded to have maximum impact.

Your success as an athlete is mirrored in the many strengths that you bring to your role as principal of the school: adaptability, commitment, confidence, determination, discipline, drive and focus. You have built a successful leadership team and an increasingly confident and competent team of middle leaders. Your 'learning for life' ethos embraces your values of achievement, engagement, enterprise and respect. You are an excellent role model for staff in terms of your passion and professionalism.

Pupils spoke positively about the school and expressed their gratitude for the support offered by their teachers. They recognised substantial improvements since your appointment and this was mirrored in the staff survey, where most staff agreed. In addition, the overwhelming majority of staff said that they enjoyed working at the school. They acknowledged the work that you were doing to reduce workload such as rewriting the marking policy to support workload management and to make the data collection cycles more manageable.

In 2017, pupils' progress and attainment were similar to national averages and progress for disadvantaged pupils was significantly below the national average. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not do as well as their peers. Attainment in science, overall, was low. Lesson observations and pupils' books suggest that pupils' outcomes, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are now much improved.

The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate was higher than the national average and the proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate was also higher. You have worked carefully on the curriculum to ensure that this is well matched to the English Baccalaureate. At the same time, you have ensured that it remains personalised to the needs of individual pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

The curriculum is very well designed to prepare them academically, socially and personally for the opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of further or higher education, employment and adult life. It actively promotes traditional British values and endorses the virtues of truth, justice, honesty and a sense of moral duty.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your colleagues ensure that safeguarding has the highest priority in your school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. Record-keeping is detailed and records are of high quality. Staff are suitably trained and aware of their responsibilities. They register concerns well and these are handled appropriately and promptly. Case files are detailed and record information accurately. Governors and staff are kept up to date about safeguarding matters and the suitability of staff to work at the school is rigorously checked.

The very large majority of pupils responding to Ofsted's online pupil survey said that they feel safe. This was confirmed through pupils' interviews and discussions in lessons and during breaks. Pupils said that bullying, in all its forms, is dealt with quickly and that they were well aware of all forms of bullying including cyber bullying. The Wednesday afternoon sessions are used well to support pupils' personal development learning as well as dealing with stress, anxiety and depression. Most parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their child was well looked after and felt safe in school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, three lines of enquiry were agreed with the principal and senior staff. The first line of enquiry considered whether outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as outcomes in science, were high enough. Lesson observations and work scrutinies confirm that the gap between these groups and their peers is narrowing as staff are better aware of their needs and training has highlighted how to support these pupils. Furthermore, all teachers have a performance management target to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in their classes.

- For pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, work is much more carefully planned to meet their specific needs. Teaching assistants are used effectively in lessons and ask pertinent questions to help pupils remain on task as well as challenging their thinking.
- In English, learning resources are successfully adapted to enable these pupils to better access the work through strategies such as writing frames and starter sentences. The support is characterised by one parent who wrote, 'My son... is a struggle to teach yet the school manage him exceptionally well with good relationships and an expectation of behaviour without condemnation.'
- Recent improvements in the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are matched by improvements across the science department because of external support focused on improving teaching, reviewing schemes of work and raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. Outcomes in design technology are also being addressed through better tracking and support.
- The second line of enquiry concerned the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and considered whether the recommendations from the previous inspection report had been addressed. Learning walks confirmed strengths in English, mathematics, art, dance, drama, history, textiles, physical education and religious education. Areas for improvement include science and design technology. Consistent assessment practice, in line with the school's policy, was noted in English and humanities. Pupils were able to describe in considerable detail exactly what they needed to do to improve their work.
- The previous inspection report asked the school to improve teaching to match the very best in the school and the school has worked hard to ensure that this happens. In lessons seen, teachers demonstrate a secure understanding of their subjects, lessons are well planned and behaviour management is purposeful and effective. The school has implemented rigorous monitoring processes and made professional development more personalised.
- The third area of focus asked whether leadership and governance were effective in improving performance and addressing differences in outcomes for different groups of pupils and specific subjects. Leaders and governors have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through accurate self-evaluation and detailed development planning. The governors of your school bring a high level of professional, academic and educational skills to their roles and give their time generously. Their skills and experience enable them to hold you and your staff to account while providing advice, support and encouragement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities improve to match those of their peers with similar starting points

- the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment in science and design technology improve to match the high quality seen across the rest of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation including self-evaluation, development plans, assessment information, curriculum plans and documents relating to safeguarding. They undertook learning walks, visiting 20 lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with a range of pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The lead inspector spoke with governors, met with a group of middle leaders and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of 56 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire, 78 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and 78 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as a similar number of accompanying written responses.