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Mr Robert Coles
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Dear Mr Coles

Short inspection of Groby Community College

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2016 with Dick Vasey, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since you joined the school, just before the last inspection, you have worked with enthusiasm and dedication to bring about an ethos of hard work and high expectations. This has resulted in positive outcomes for the pupils who attend the school. Typically, the pupils show positive attitudes to learning. The school fosters in the pupils a sense of self-worth and of respect for others.

The governing body is very effective in its strategic role. As well as giving you support and challenge, governors have confidence in your passion and determination to bring about further improvements in the school. They, like you, are very ambitious for the school's future. You evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your school meticulously and identify priorities for improvement in your carefully constructed school improvement plan.

You and governors have brought about significant improvements by implementing a range of strategies. At times this has meant making difficult decisions and taking swift action to ensure that the school continues to be good. You are not afraid to challenge weak performance and take rigorous action to improve the quality of teaching where standards fall below those expected.

Teachers' high expectations of pupils' outcomes ensure that pupils achieve consistently well and that progress overall is consistently good.

Leaders have worked very effectively to raise attainment in English. All groups of pupils, from the least to the most able, make rates of progress that are consistently well above national averages. Outcomes in mathematics improved significantly in 2015. A dip in the 2016 results has led to a targeted approach to ensure that pupils consistently achieve as highly in mathematics as they do in English. Middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the key issues which still need to be addressed.

The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are improving across the school. In English, these pupils achieve as well as others nationally. This is not the case in mathematics, where the differences remain, especially for the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors have recognised that progress for disadvantaged pupils has not been as good as for other pupils. They are sharpening their practices and a larger team is now in place to support this group of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils have access to personalised programmes of support and additional teaching. You and other leaders are ensuring a higher focus on mathematics and on the most able pupils.

The flexible curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to successfully progress to their next stages of education, employment or training. Pupils told inspectors that they really appreciate the freedom they are given in their subject choices. They understand the purpose of their learning and are ambitious for their futures. This is apparent, for example, in the high proportion of pupils going on to further education. However, the uptake of, and achievement in, the English Baccalaureate subjects is not as well established when compared to other schools nationally, especially for the most able disadvantaged pupils.

You have attended to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection very effectively. Teachers now plan work to meet the needs of pupils' different ability levels and ensure that the most able pupils are increasingly stretched in their learning. Pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form spoke very positively about the quality of teaching they receive and the level of challenge they encounter. You have also extended the partnership work between home and the school. You actively encourage parents to become involved in their children's education. Pupils' attendance has risen, the exclusion of pupils has reduced and the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved overall.

These successes demonstrate the impact of good leadership and the school's capacity for improvement in the future. Leaders and governors recognise that there is still work to be done. They know that they must sustain improvements in mathematics and ensure that disadvantaged pupils consistently achieve as well as others in all subjects. There is more to do to ensure that the aspirations of disadvantaged pupils, especially the most able, are further raised so that they more frequently access the more demanding subjects. In some subjects, especially in the academic 16 to 19 programme of study, students do not perform as well as they should. In response, you have made changes to the courses on offer and have set

about improving the leadership and teaching of these subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong ethos of safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Staff are kept up to date about safeguarding issues through a regular programme of updates and briefings. Policies are up to date and well understood by staff. They understand how to deal with disclosures and report any concerns. Pupils are kept safe.

Partnership working is effective and the school has strong relationships with external agencies and the local authority. The designated teacher for safeguarding ensures that referrals are acted on in a timely manner and concerns are followed up carefully. Groups of pupils who spoke with inspectors, including some of those in the sixth form, said they feel safe in the school and that they feel comfortable telling an adult about any concerns they may have. As a result of the learning opportunities provided through the school's curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.

Inspection findings

- You have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school in your self-evaluation. The school improvement plan takes the priorities identified in the self-evaluation and sets out clearly the actions that you will undertake to achieve your objectives.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the approaches needed to secure improvement at the school. They measure progress against the objectives in the improvement plan using clearly defined success criteria. Governors are unafraid to withhold a pay rise if a teacher's performance does not justify an increase in their salary. They ensure that the school's budget is well spent.
- Together with the governors you have restructured leadership teams and brought in new leaders to ensure that you have the capacity to drive the remaining developments forward. These leaders have a good grasp of what needs to be done to bring about further improvements.
- Middle leaders use a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching in their area, including the checking of pupils' work in books and pupils' own views about their learning. Consequently, they have an accurate view of existing strengths and areas where improvement is required.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. Last year, some pupils did not perform as well in a few subject areas. Leaders use well-established processes to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a consequence, they have accurately identified and set targets to improve these subjects.
- Partnership work, with the adjacent school, to create one mathematics

department and a focus on qualifications which help deepen pupils' understanding are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use assessment information effectively to identify and plan for pupils' needs. They provide pupils with feedback that sets out clearly what they need to do to improve.
- The school's latest performance information indicates that results are likely to improve this year, especially in some of the subjects that have not performed as well as others in the past. This is as a result of your determined efforts to drive up standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils told inspectors that they value the additional support they are given. Staff keep detailed records on the progress of these pupils, along with any areas of work where they are unclear in their understanding. This helps the teachers to give the pupils effective support so that they better understand their work. As a result of this support, the overall progress that these pupils make has improved.
- In English, leaders have eliminated the difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. The same outcome has yet to be established in mathematics. Leaders check the progress of disadvantaged pupils robustly and carefully. Sophisticated systems are used to check that pupils are learning as they should and additional programmes of support, for those pupils who need help to catch up, are available. This work is being monitored to bring about the further improvement needed.
- Expectations of what can be achieved by disadvantaged pupils have increased. However, the school's current practice of guided option routes, especially in respect of the more demanding subjects and qualifications, university taster days and career fairs has not raised these pupils' aspirations sufficiently, especially for the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form, particularly in the vocational subjects. Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their social and employability skills. There is, however, some variability in the progress made across different subjects, especially in the academic courses.
- You have taken swift action to improve pupils' attendance at the school. Procedures to monitor, track and support those pupils with poorer attendance have been enhanced. As a result, attendance is now comparable to national figures. This is also true for those individuals who are persistently absent. Although attendance and persistent absence have improved for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the rate of this improvement has not matched that of other pupils.
- You have reduced the high levels of pupil exclusion recorded previously from the school. However, there is still work to do to reduce exclusion rates for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in

line with others in the school and nationally.

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The school's achievements and developments are published to inform parents, stakeholders and the local community of what is going on in the school and how well it is doing.
- From the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, it is evident that the majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. A small proportion of parents believe that the school could provide more valuable information about their child's progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - raising their aspirations further and encouraging the most able disadvantaged pupils to pursue the more demanding subjects and qualifications
 - diminishing the differences in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in mathematics
- reduce the variability between different subjects in the 16 to 19 academic programme of study, so that students make rates of progress that are consistently above average.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, the designated teacher responsible for safeguarding, and leaders of attendance and behaviour, the sixth form, the curriculum, disadvantaged pupils and mathematics.

The inspection team made a series of visits to lessons, with you and other senior leaders, across the main school and the sixth form.

Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons. Inspectors held three

discussions with a wide variety of pupils from the main school and the sixth form.

Inspectors considered the views of 45 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 114 pupils and 29 staff, as well as the school's own parental survey.

In addition, inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and exclusions and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school. Safeguarding records, policies and practices were reviewed.

Inspectors studied information related to teachers' monitoring, development and appraisal. They examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.

- This short inspection focused on:
 - the differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in the school
 - whether mathematics was maintaining a good level of progress, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - how the curriculum was enabling all pupils to make equally good rates of progress
 - whether the 16 to 19 academic programme of study was maintaining a high standard
 - if attendance and exclusions at the school were improving
 - if safeguarding was still effective across the school and pupils were safe.