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Mrs Lynton Golds  
Interim headteacher  
Robertsbridge Community College  
Knelle Road  
Robertsbridge  
East Sussex  
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Dear Mrs Golds

### **Short inspection of Robertsbridge Community College**

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2017 with Karon Buck, 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 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 took up your acting post in November 2016 and with the strong support of other leaders, you have ensured that the school continues to make progress. Leaders at all levels share your clear vision for the school's success and contribute well to continuing improvement. You, governors, and other leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and of the areas that are less strong. Leaders support staff well to sustain school improvement. As a result, governors and the local authority express full confidence in you and your leadership team.

Pupils and staff are very proud of their school. They feel listened to and valued. Pupils take an active part in the life of the school, for example through the school council, the anti-bullying committee and peer mentoring. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to explore local and national democracy, including activities such as the whole-day focus on the European Union referendum. Pupils regularly benefit from effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and tutor group activities. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well supported, for example through charity work, a wide range of helpful extra-curricular activities, assemblies and work in tutor groups. Inspectors found the pupils to be polite, courteous and very focused on their learning in lessons.

Staff appreciate the way you have ensured continuity in the school's priorities and values. They welcome the opportunities you provide for them to take on more

responsibility. New teachers feel very well supported and all staff value the helpful opportunities for professional development in a culture of encouragement.

In your recent evaluation of the school's effectiveness, you rightly highlighted attendance as a key focus for improvement, particularly for pupils who receive free school meals and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Helpfully, you have raised the profile of the importance of good attendance with parents through your weekly newsletters.

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked successfully to improve the effectiveness of the feedback teachers give pupils on their work. As a result, pupils have an accurate understanding of how well they are achieving and how to improve. Teachers provide pupils with work that is suitably matched to their needs. This was seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils were able to choose challenging tasks of increasing difficulty using algebraic proofs. In an English lesson, those pupils who needed more support were provided with detailed structures to guide them through the activities.

Leaders have successfully addressed the weaknesses in geography and history teaching identified in the previous inspection report. Teaching in these subjects now enables pupils to make good progress. As a result, the number of pupils opting for these subjects at GCSE has increased. Rightly, improving pupils' literacy skills and pupils' presentation of their work remain key priorities for leaders.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school site is secure and visitors well managed. The necessary checks are made and recorded efficiently when staff are recruited. Staff monitor pupils' welfare closely, making ready referrals to leaders if concerns arise. Leaders maintain thorough records and refer any concerns to the local authority or other partners promptly. Leaders adopt a positive approach to referral and to accessing external safeguarding checks, advice and guidance.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Training for all staff is kept up to date efficiently, with an increasing proportion of leaders trained to higher levels. All teachers have an objective relating to safeguarding as part of their performance management. Whistleblowing procedures are clear. Leaders ensure that staff are fully aware of pupils' medical needs and how to respond to, and support, affected pupils. When planning for the curriculum and pupils' welfare, leaders give helpful consideration to recent events and influences beyond the school, for example online risks and trends fuelled by social media.

Governors monitor safeguarding carefully. The lead governor for safeguarding conducts regular monitoring visits, reporting back to the full governing body. Governors routinely attend staff training and are conscientious about their own training, for example about staff recruitment and the management of any allegations against staff. Safeguarding matters are a routine priority on governors'

meeting agendas, and discussed regularly in the headteacher's weekly meetings with the chair of the governing body. When parents express any concerns, these are addressed promptly and in line with local authority guidance.

Pupils overwhelmingly feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are made aware of the dangers of the internet and how to keep themselves safe online through assemblies, the PSHE programme and information and communication technology lessons. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare, due to the strong mentoring, peer-to-peer support and positive role models provided by older pupils. On the rare occasions bullying does arise, pupils say it is dealt with swiftly by teachers often using 'restorative justice' approaches. Pupils are taught well to respect those who have protected characteristics, for example those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Pupils taking on the role of LGBT ambassadors exemplify the school's open and supportive culture.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders are taking effective action, well supported by the local authority consultant, to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the attendance of these pupils, and consequently their academic progress, is beginning to improve steadily, although more remains to be achieved.
- Outcomes remain below the national average for disadvantaged pupils. However, the differences between their performance and that of their classmates, and other pupils nationally, are diminishing. In English, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved rapidly and these pupils are now making similar progress to their peers within school. In mathematics, leaders' actions and the actions of staff to improve attendance have had a positive impact on the achievement of previously low-attaining pupils. Effective support and mentoring is enabling this group of pupils to catch up with work previously missed.
- Leaders rightly identified that the low numbers of disadvantaged pupils choosing humanities and languages subjects limited these pupils' access to an EBacc qualification, and therefore their future opportunities. Encouraged by governors, leaders have taken effective action, including supporting subject leaders well, to increase the number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, choosing humanities and languages subjects in the last three years.
- The exclusion rates for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were particularly high in the past. Leaders are taking effective action to reverse this situation, including by introducing alternative sanctions and support, although more remains to be achieved.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the differences between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the school and other pupils nationally diminish further
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to improve
- the rate of exclusion continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Lee  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors focused on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, leaders' effectiveness in improving pupils' attendance and reducing the frequency of fixed-term exclusions, and the breadth of the curriculum. Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, other staff and governors, and local authority representatives. The team observed pupils in lessons and as they moved around the school. They spoke with pupils in groups and in lessons. Inspectors visited a number of lessons, some jointly with senior leaders, and examined pupils' work. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, the work of the governing body, and pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors considered 104 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 46 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, and the outcomes of surveys conducted by school leaders throughout the year.