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21 March 2017

Mrs Julie Phelan
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Dear Mrs Phelan

Short inspection of Cullompton Community College

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with David New, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Standards have continued to improve and, in 2016, Year 11 pupils made strong progress placing the school in the top 10% of schools in the country for key stage 4 results. This is a result of your concerted efforts to improve the life chances for your pupils. Cullompton Community College is a caring school where pupils thrive. As a result, pupil numbers continue to rise.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching and learning in a small number of subjects and in most you have achieved this. You were also asked to improve the outcomes for pupils who have additional needs, including those eligible for the pupil premium. The appointment of a senior leader to take on the responsibility of coordinating support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up, has brought about improvement for these pupils.

We found the school to be an orderly environment where pupils are respectful, both to one another and to adults. Pupils told inspectors how well supported they feel and how much they appreciate the opportunities your team provide.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all staff and governors are aware of the risks pupils face and take swift action when there are concerns, including about radicalisation and

extremism. Your own training, as the designated leader for safeguarding, and that of your deputies, is up to date and policies and practice reflect the latest guidance. You have ensured that there are good standards of record-keeping and you involve external agencies when necessary. When you do have cause to refer cases to the local authority, you are tenacious in chasing up referrals when the response is not timely. Similarly, you understand the system well and so know how to escalate a case when you are not satisfied with the response.

You work well with other agencies to support pupils at times of greatest need, when specialist support is needed, for example arranging bereavement counselling. When you are concerned that a child is not attending school and may have moved out of the area, you have instigated actions to locate them and ensure they are safe.

Pupils and their parents report the school to be a safe place. Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked of a culture of tolerance and acceptance. They enjoy opportunities when other pupils share their experiences, including those who have different cultures and faiths. They also value the assemblies on staying safe and speak of their greater awareness of how they may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work that the inspection would focus on.

- The first aspect we explored was the attainment of the most able pupils. In recent years, the most able pupils have not achieved the highest grades at GCSE in a number of subjects. We found that, in lessons and in pupils' work over this academic year, there is good challenge for the most able pupils. Their work is of a high standard and is well presented. In many subjects, pupils engage in high-quality conversation and debates. In mathematics, the most able pupils were adept at using their reasoning skills to explain how they solve complex problems. Teachers' feedback encourages pupils to deepen their understanding; for example pupils could explain clearly the nutritional value of the dishes they prepare in food technology. The school's policy on marking for literacy is applied inconsistently across subjects. Spelling errors are more commonly picked up than punctuation or grammar errors.
- The second area we considered was the impact that pupil premium funding is having on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Governors have carefully considered and reviewed how this funding is used and added additional funds to enhance this work further. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils' achievement has improved and in 2016 Year 11 pupils achieved progress scores above those achieved by other pupils nationally. The standards in many subjects, particularly in science and English, are high. This group of pupils are working at a similar level to that of other pupils from the same starting points. Accelerated progress is seen for the most able disadvantaged pupils. Pupils who joined the school in Year 7 below the standards expected for their age are rapidly catching up. Intervention programmes in literacy and numeracy are effective in accelerating progress. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are confident, self-assured learners.

- However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not plan learning that accurately matches the needs of the middle-ability disadvantaged pupils. We also noted that while disadvantaged pupils complete home learning activities, they do not show the same depth of understanding as their classmates of similar abilities.
- The effectiveness of careers advice, especially for girls, was the third area we looked at. Destinations information for pupils who left school in 2016 shows that a greater proportion than in previous years have remained in education, employment or training. You have arranged for impartial careers advice and guidance to be provided to Year 8 pupils when they choose their options for key stage 4 and for Year 11 pupils in preparation for moving on. As a result, key stage 4 pupils make well-informed choices about the qualifications they follow. You have arranged an extensive range of opportunities to raise pupils' aspirations, including a recent visit to Oxford University for Year 10 pupils. You have robustly challenged stereotypes in employment. The girls show interest in following a wide range of careers, including motor mechanics and, as a consequence of their participation in the 'Women in Construction' programme, in the building industry. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were animated about the support the school provides to help them understand opportunities, the skills needed and how to achieve their career ambitions.
- The fourth area we explored was the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2016, this group made markedly better progress than they have done in the last three sets of key stage 4 results. Your Director of Additional Needs provides strong leadership, including to other schools in the teaching school alliance of which Cullompton Community College is a member. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in learning, such as in horticulture, opening pathways for them to progress to further education or employment. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through careful planning by teachers, especially in history and science. Parents are now much more involved with the school in helping their children to succeed. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in almost all year groups are making strong progress.
- The final aspect of your work that we reviewed focused on the safety of pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, including their attendance and behaviour. Attendance for pupils overall is in line with national levels. Attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and is now similar to that of other pupils. Persistent absence remains slightly above the historic level nationally. Effective work with the education welfare officer and the actions of your own staff are reducing the level of persistent absence. Many pupils who currently have attendance below 90% are improving week by week. As a result of the focus your senior team gives to improving behaviour, exclusions are falling. This is especially true of disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils improve the accuracy of their grammar and use of punctuation
- teachers support middle-ability disadvantaged pupils further, including in their home learning, so they make more rapid rates of progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection inspectors observed learning in classrooms, looking at pupils' books. We were accompanied by senior leaders in all these activities. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at break. One inspector heard pupils read. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders and two governors. I also spoke with an officer of the local authority.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 25 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires of 208 pupils and 54 members of staff. I also took into account the contents of a letter received.