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Mr Hugh Hennebry
Principal
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Dear Mr Hennebry

Short inspection of Uckfield Community Technology College

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Colin Lankester, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have worked closely with the governors to recruit a strong team of leaders who have reinvigorated your drive for further improvement. You are determined that all pupils should be challenged to do as well as they possibly can. Your motto 'realising potential' puts a strong focus on ensuring that pupils have many opportunities available to them, both academically and through extra-curricular provision.

The leadership team has improved many of the school's systems and procedures over the last two years and they are now fully embedded. For example, arrangements for issuing sanctions and rewards are understood by all, and the achievement points awarded for good effort and behaviour are popular with pupils. Pupils are friendly and polite and there is a harmonious atmosphere in the school. Pupils are typically very well behaved. One parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, summed up the ethos of the school as: 'encouraging the young people to love learning, be interested in the world around them, take care of it and take care of one another'.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Teachers make better use of assessment information to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils, including those who need extra support. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress. Pupils appreciate the guidance their

teachers give them and they say that they know very specifically how to improve their skills and knowledge. However, you have identified that some of your subject leaders need to make better use of assessment information so that they can better hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress.

Teachers make good use of the technology available which gives them access to the lesson resources and homework tasks. Pupils say that homework tasks extend their current learning and provide additional challenge. Through good use of technology, parents can also now be more closely involved in homework.

You have created a focused plan to raise the achievement of boys, middle prior-attaining pupils and disadvantaged pupils. The leadership team has developed a wide range of effective approaches to monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Consequently, leaders and governors have a strong understanding of the strengths of the school and also where further improvement is required. You have worked with a group of local schools to carry out a review of the science department and have already acted on the recommendations made.

Leaders recognise that they need to do more to improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils. You were able to show some case studies for pupils who had been persistently absent for different reasons and evidence was seen of some improvements. Pastoral leaders now have a more rigorous approach in place which ensures greater consistency across all year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors give safeguarding the highest priority. The necessary checks are completed rigorously and records are well maintained. Policies and practice reflect the most up-to-date guidance on keeping children safe. Annual training is undertaken by all staff and regular updates are given when appropriate. This ensures that all staff are alert to any new issues which may arise.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are confident that they can trust adults around them and will seek advice if needed. Safeguarding is interwoven into pupils' personal development time with tutors and in assemblies. The personal, social and health education programme is adapted in response to any new issues emerging. Pupils feel particularly well trained in how to stay safe online. Parents comment positively that their children are safe and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on the following lines of enquiry: how effectively leaders are using extra funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress; how well teaching and assessment meets the needs of all learners and particularly middle prior-attaining pupils; how effectively leaders are improving attendance and reducing persistent absence; and how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including in the sixth form.
- Leaders have used catch-up funding to good effect, with eligible pupils making

strong progress in English and mathematics in Year 7. Leaders set ambitious targets for each year group. Subject leaders ensure that the pupils targeted for intervention are a priority and that disadvantaged pupils know what they have to do to improve their work further. This has had a particularly strong impact for current pupils in Year 9. However, leaders know that they still need to work with subject leaders to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

- Teachers have worked collaboratively to produce new schemes of learning to increase the level of challenge for pupils and ensure a consistent approach to feedback. This is having a positive impact on the progress of middle-attaining pupils. Parents appreciate how well their children's needs are met in lessons. One parent who responded to the online questionnaire said, 'I am impressed with the passion of the teachers for their subjects and that all the teachers seem to personally know my children'. Teachers have extended the use of digital resources so that homework is better integrated into pupils' learning. Pupils feel that their teachers listen to them in lessons and that they are well challenged.
- Senior leaders and governors are tackling lower-than-national-average attendance with increased urgency. Leaders have tightened up procedures so that pastoral leaders have a consistent approach to working with parents. Pastoral leaders have set up small intervention groups in order to better focus their efforts and this has already shown improvements for the pupils involved. Year 9 pupils said that the rewards points system for regular attendance is very motivating, especially as parents now have easy access to that information. Leaders have acted on evidence from the behaviour review to improve behaviour generally and raise expectations of the standard required. There has been a sustained reduction in fixed-term exclusions over the last two years. Sixth-form attendance is good overall. Leaders accept that there is still further improvement needed to ensure that attendance continues to rapidly improve to reach above national averages for all, including disadvantaged pupils.
- As part of personal development time, tutors give guidance to all key stage 3 pupils about subjects they wish to study for GCSE. Pupils feel very well supported and are happy with their choices. The careers adviser works full time on the school site, giving easy access to a wide range of resources. School leaders pride themselves on the broad range of subjects available both in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils really enjoy some of the more unusual choices available to them. School leaders have given more time to the options subjects this year to ensure better progress for all.
- There is new leadership of the sixth form. You have seized the opportunity to refresh and update the curriculum offer. You are increasing cooperation with other local providers in order to maintain and extend the curriculum to match your students' needs. This includes offering more vocational courses. Students said that the extra-curricular provision has expanded and offers a variety of experiences.
- Governors know the school well and have adapted their working practices to include more regular opportunities to track the progress of all groups across all years. They have a wealth and breadth of experience and expertise which enable

them to hold leaders to account effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance continues to improve for all pupils and specifically for disadvantaged pupils so that it matches or exceeds national averages
- subject leaders sharpen the use of performance information to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils, in particular those who are disadvantaged.

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

Beverley Murtagh
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your leadership team, and middle leaders. I also met with members of the governing body and I had a phone call with the local authority school improvement representative. Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from Years 9, 10 and the sixth form. Together with members of your leadership team, we looked at lessons in a variety of subjects across different year groups. A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including your analyses of pupils' achievement, attendance information, and a range of policies, including those for safeguarding. We checked that the single central record complied with requirements. We analysed the 281 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the 95 responses to the staff survey, and the 617 responses to the pupil survey.