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James Ellis  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Ellis

### **Short inspection of Ambergate Sports College**

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Linda Lyn-Cook, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in January 2013.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your staff have high expectations of all your pupils. You take effective action to ensure that pupils make strong progress and prepare well for life after school. You have ensured that your staff know their pupils well and that, in teaching them, they plan appropriate learning activities that enable pupils to fulfil their potential. The books that inspectors looked at showed that pupils often learn similar topics and concepts as their peers, but through personalised tasks that cater for their own, individual needs. This precise planning that teachers undertake ensures that all pupils engage well with, and take pride in, their learning. As a result, nearly all pupils make outstanding progress.

You have ensured that staff receive regular opportunities to share best practice and learn from their colleagues' experiences. Such occasions occur daily, as part of the regular meetings at which staff discuss individual pupils' progress and welfare. Staff are also able to visit other schools to observe best practice. Through sharing best practice, your staff work well as a team. Staff support each other well to ensure that pupils engage with their learning and make strong progress. Of the pupils that expressed a view through the online survey, a large majority said that they enjoy coming to school and that they enjoy learning all of the time. This is due to the close support that teachers provide for pupils to help them to learn well.

You and your senior leaders have a precise understanding of the quality of teaching

at the school. You have achieved this through your regular visits to lessons and your comprehensive systems for checking pupils' work. In so doing, you provide your teachers with detailed feedback. You are also able to ensure that teachers receive appropriate support to sharpen their practice further. You achieve this through carefully pairing teachers together to mentor and support each other.

You have rightly identified that a key priority for the school is to ensure that all pupils receive effective support to prepare them for the world of work. You have done this, for example, through ensuring that all pupils in Year 11 undertake substantial periods of work experience, including in businesses and workplaces in the local area. This strategy helps to prepare pupils thoroughly for their next steps. This is evident in the progression that all of last year's Year 11 pupils made to sustained places of training or education, including in mainstream education, alternative provision and apprenticeships. Your engagement with local businesses in providing work experience helps you to engage with the local community, and to dispel any misconceptions members of the community may have about pupils who have high functioning autism. Crucially, your programme of preparation for pupils' next steps is raising pupils' aspirations. In turn, parents now have higher expectations of what their child can achieve while at the school, and upon leaving.

You and your staff work tirelessly to support pupils in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in their understanding of fundamental British values. The weekly British values project allows pupils to consider topics related to rights, democracy, and the need to show respect to others. You actively encourage your staff to teach pupils about moral and topical issues in ways that are age-appropriate and appropriate to pupils' individual needs. You do this to allow pupils the opportunity to consider how such issues affect them. For example, pupils in a mixed Year 4, 5 and 6 class considered the notions of good and evil through their study of Buddhism. This built extremely effectively upon their prior learning of other religions, including Sikhism, and had previously provided them with appropriate opportunities to reflect upon the recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. Such discussions prepare your pupils comprehensively for life in modern Britain.

Governors have a very precise understanding of the quality of the school's provision. They achieve this through asking challenging questions of you and your leaders. Governors do not settle for excuses. Furthermore, where they identify a weakness in their own collective skills as a governing body, the governors ensure that they undertake appropriate training. In this, the multi-academy trust, of which the school is a member, provides very effective support.

Governors have recognised the value in sharing their expertise with those responsible for governance of other schools, both within the multi-academy trust and outside. This mirrors your own outstanding commitment to improving the quality of education in the local area through working with other schools, both special and mainstream schools. You rightly recognise how colleagues in these schools benefit from the support you provide them. You also understand how your staff benefit from working with other schools. Importantly, you, as headteacher, are working with other schools in the local authority to design effective systems to

measure the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your work with other schools reflects your school's commitment to the local area, and you and your staff's commitment to the school's ethos that, for everyone, their experience of education should be 'valuable, inspiring, personalised'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The staff who have responsibility for safeguarding work well as a team to support pupils to help keep them safe. The staff work closely with the pupils, their parents and external agencies to ensure that there is the necessary support when there are concerns about pupils' welfare. This includes the use of a wide range of therapies that the school uses to support pupils. These therapies, which include yoga, music therapy and counselling, enable your staff to provide support to pupils at an early stage. This in turn helps pupils to manage their welfare more effectively. You know this, as you closely monitor the effect that these therapies have on pupils' welfare, and their ability to manage their own feelings and emotions. In making referrals to external agencies, leaders work hard to secure appropriate support for pupils.

The regular safeguarding training and updates that staff receive provide them with a secure understanding of the different types of abuse, and the signs to look for in the children that they teach. All staff understand their responsibility to help keep pupil safe, and to ensure that pupils learn how to keep safe. You and other senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- Teachers set pupils challenging targets in English and mathematics, and targets that relate to pupils' personal development. The school's own performance information shows that almost all current pupils are on track to achieve their target in mathematics. This reflects previous achievement in this subject. While achievement in English has been high, the proportion achieving their target in this subject has not reached the very high level seen in mathematics.
- Many pupils leave the school with a range of appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs and work-related qualifications. Their achievement in these subjects represents outstanding progress for these pupils, including the most able.
- The achievement of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those who are in the care of the local authority, is similar to that of their non-disadvantaged peers within the school. This represents outstanding progress for these pupils.
- Attendance at the school for all pupils is very high. The proportions of pupils who are absent, including those who are regularly absent, are below the national averages for special schools. Currently, over one third of pupils have been present every day this academic year. Leaders rightly recognise the importance of ensuring that pupils attend regularly, to secure better achievement for pupils, and to enable staff to cater for pupils' welfare more effectively.
- Incidents of poor behaviour at the school have significantly reduced due to the support that pupils receive to manage their own behaviour. This includes the

promotion of positive behaviour through the use of rewards called 'powerpoints'.

- The school's current and future leaders take part in a leadership coaching programme. This has enabled leaders to develop a thorough and comprehensive oversight of each leader's role, and of the quality of the school's provision.
- Pupils receive wide-ranging opportunities to learn how to be safe, including being safe online and being safe in the local community. Those pupils that inspectors met, and those who responded to the pupils' online survey, all agreed that they feel safe at the school, and that they have an adult that they can speak to if they have a concern. All pupils have confidence that the adult will help them to resolve their concern. All parents who expressed a view agreed with this.
- Almost all parents who responded to the online survey said that they would recommend the school to someone else.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in all year groups, the proportion of pupils who achieve their target in English consistently matches the very high proportion of pupils who achieve their target in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the Community Inclusive Trust, the multi-academy trust of which the school is a member. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed learning in 12 lessons. They visited these lessons with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' books when they visited lessons. They also looked at pupils' books as a separate activity, with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to the school's performance, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, and documents concerning safeguarding, attainment, behaviour and attendance.

Inspectors took into account the views of 16 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 12 responses to the free-text service. An inspector also met with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors took

into account the 34 responses to the staff survey and the 24 responses to the pupil survey. The lead inspector gave oral feedback to you and to representatives of the governing body and the trust.