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Mrs Claire Wood
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Dear Mrs Wood

Short inspection of Godmanchester Community Academy

Following my visit to the school on 13 July 2017, 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 June 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 and your leadership team have strengthened the vision and values of the school, which support pupils in developing strong academic and social skills. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the ways in which the school has supported their children's development. This is evident in the numerous positive statements made in Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents wrote about the 'kind, caring, thoughtful staff' and how staff 'genuinely care about the welfare and happiness of pupils, as well as their academic success'.

Focused, reflective leadership, including that of governors, has underpinned the ways in which school improvement priorities are addressed. You are providing clarity of vision and, together with your leadership team, you have ensured that actions to improve areas identified in the school development plan are clear and sustainable. For example, your focus on improving the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning is recognised by many parents as a strength of the school.

Governance at Godmanchester Community Academy is robust. The well-led

governing body offers challenge and support in equal measure. Governors share your high expectations and aspirations for the social and academic success of each pupil. Governors gather key information on the progress pupils make through regular visits, meetings with staff and talking to pupils. Governors are sufficiently informed about the school to be able to ask challenging questions and commend leaders on the quality of teaching and learning.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind, empathetic and supportive of each other's learning. They contribute fully to the harmonious learning environment that is such a positive feature in the school. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations. Pupils are eager to learn. You have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils have access to a high-quality curriculum that develops their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them. You have also ensured that pupils have ample opportunity to learn about different faiths and cultures such as Islam and Hinduism. Consequently, pupils are developing into well-balanced, considerate members of the community.

You correctly judge reading to be a strength of the school. Effective leadership has ensured that pupils develop strong phonics skills. As a result, pupils are able to apply their phonics skills to a range of texts. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed reading and choosing books from the good range of texts in the small libraries attached to their classrooms. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading at both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Attainment at both key stages is also robust. This is due to the level of challenge embedded in the reading curriculum and teachers' consistently focused approach to the study of language. Pupils are able to analyse the effect of words and phrases in texts with sophistication and maturity.

The structure of the curriculum is also a particular strength of the school. Connected by a theme such as the town of Godmanchester, pupils explore different subjects such as history, geography, science and art. For example, Year 6 pupils studied the history of the Second World War alongside developing their creative writing skills after a visit to Duxford Imperial War Museum.

You and your leaders take swift action to address areas for improvement. For example, as a result of improvements in the teaching of writing, pupils' progress in both key stages has increased. Outcomes at key stage 2 decreased in 2016, but improvements in the ways in which pupils edit their writing and make informed choices about words and sentence types have accelerated the progress of most pupils in 2017. You recognise, however, that there are still areas for the school to improve. You have already introduced a range of strategies to improve the achievements of disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum. You acknowledge that you need to continue to improve the additional support offered to all disadvantaged pupils, regardless of their individual starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of keeping safe when online. The school has ensured that pupils have well-developed strategies to ensure that they stay safe online. Parents who responded to Parent View affirmed that children were safe, happy and well looked after at the school. Pupils understand the definition of bullying. They told me that bullying was uncommon at the school and that, if it occurred, staff were quick to resolve any issues. Staff are available at all times to talk to pupils to help them resolve conflicts.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust. Employment checks, alongside checks on all adults who visit the school, are thorough and reviewed regularly. Safeguarding leads are tenacious in following up referrals to ensure that pupils in need of support receive the best quality of care. The documentation relating to concerns about pupils is kept securely and monitored regularly. Staff receive regular training in their safeguarding responsibilities. The processes for staff to report concerns about pupils are clear. Pupils also told me that they knew whom to go to if they had any concerns and that they were confident these would be dealt with promptly.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum. Test results in 2016 demonstrated that disadvantaged pupils did not achieve in line with other pupils nationally in writing at key stage 2 and phonics in Year 1. Although the difference was not significant, you have recognised this as a key area.
- It became very apparent through visiting classrooms and talking to staff and your leadership team that the progress of disadvantaged pupils was an absolute priority. You have an informed understanding of the complex barriers to disadvantaged pupils' educational development. Using this information, you have introduced critical approaches to developing pupils' understanding of the wider world and to strengthen their language skills. You have introduced an impressive range of external trips and visits to complement the curriculum, such as to Flag Fen, to support pupils' understanding of the Bronze Age. You and your leadership team have also reviewed the curriculum to ensure that there is a central focus on language development. For example, the writing curriculum supports pupils to make clear language choices to improve their writing for different purposes, audiences and text types. All disadvantaged pupils, regardless of their starting points, receive additional one-to-one support. As a result, in 2017 disadvantaged pupils have made good progress in writing in both key stages.
- You recognise the importance of raising aspirations and expectations for disadvantaged pupils and have introduced a system whereby each disadvantaged

pupil has a designated staff member as a point of contact. As a result, pupils told me that they felt well supported in class and in the playground. Results in all areas of the curriculum have begun to improve, but it is too early to measure the full impact.

- As my second line of enquiry, I focused on how well the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, developed their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. This was an area identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Evidence, such as work in pupils' books, demonstrated that the most able pupils receive substantial challenge in many areas of the curriculum. For example, the science curriculum has a strong focus on developing pupils' investigative skills, such as observation and making hypotheses. Pupils developed their understanding of scientific processes through investigations such as making and testing the aerodynamics of paper aeroplanes in Year 4. Consequently, the most able pupils told me how much they enjoyed science and how they felt they developed key skills.
- I also focused on the improvements that pupils in both key stages were making in writing. The writing curriculum includes a strong focus on how language works within texts. Pupils are conscious of themselves as writers. They take time to consider the words and sentences they would like to use in their writing. They evaluate the impact of their language choices carefully and edit their work accordingly. Some of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, told me about complex language structures and their importance and role within texts, such as fronted adverbials and ellipsis. Consequently, the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, use sophisticated language and structures to target different audiences and purposes.
- Reading is a strength at the school. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve well in reading. The reading curriculum overlaps well with the writing curriculum, enabling pupils to consider how language shapes the ideas and characters in texts. Additional challenges are provided for the most able pupils in mathematics, enabling them to extend their understanding in areas such as reasoning and fluency.
- I also considered the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities across the curriculum, as they did not make progress in line with that of other pupils nationally in writing in 2016. You and your leadership team understand the needs of these pupils well and ensure that they receive tailored support. Well-trained teaching assistants enable pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum. Staff employ many strategies, including carefully considered questioning, to develop pupils' understanding. You ensure that pupils and their parents and carers are fully involved in the educational support that staff provide. As a result, pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities are making improved progress in writing and other areas of the curriculum.
- I also focused on how well pupils were prepared to keep themselves safe both in school and beyond. You and your leadership team, staff and governors are alert to safeguarding concerns. Your system of referral and support is robust.

Attendance for disadvantaged pupils was below the national average in 2015 and 2016. However, you and your leadership team have embedded strategies to address pupil absence, such as providing breakfast and sensory circuits at the beginning of the day. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has increased and is now in line with the national figure. You regularly analyse attendance together with pupils' progress to identify patterns of underachievement and potential safeguarding issues. Your vigilance supports the physical and emotional well-being of pupils in all years. The curriculum also supports pupils' understanding of how to maintain their emotional well-being. For example, the religious education curriculum promotes pupils' personal reflections on religious teachings.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to provide high-quality support to disadvantaged pupils, so that they make accelerated progress in all areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the course of this inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders and a group of five governors. I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met with a group of 16 pupils. During two tours of the school with you, I visited each class and observed pupils at work. I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school. A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; minutes of governing body meetings and curriculum plans.

I considered the views of 72 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views parents expressed via free text.