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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Michael Johnson
Executive Headteacher
Chulmleigh Community College
Beacon Road
Chulmleigh
Devon
EX18 7AA

Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of Chulmleigh Community College

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2018 with Carol Hannaford, 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 February 2015.

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 continued to provide clear direction and strong leadership. You have been well supported by other senior leaders and governors. It was clear to inspectors that there is a collegiate approach to improving provision and opportunities for all pupils.

Leaders have focused well on ensuring that teaching across subjects is consistently good or better. High priority has been given to developing pupils' reading and other communication skills. Leaders have continued to develop systems to check and monitor pupils' progress against personalised targets. If any pupil is identified as falling behind, effective intervention is quickly put in place to help them to catch up. The examination results gained by Year 11 pupils overall have continued to improve and outcomes have been consistently above the national average across subjects. In English, pupils have made more progress than similar pupils nationally, but in mathematics the progress made by pupils has not exceeded the national average.

Leaders have strengthened the arrangements which give pupils guidance and support. Guilds have been established in key stage 4; these help teachers to provide personalised assistance to pupils. Leaders have very high expectations of pupils and the great majority of pupils respond positively. Inspectors observed excellent standards of conduct around the school. Pupils are very smartly dressed in their uniform; many wear reward badges with pride. A parent remarked that teachers 'encourage effort by rewarding the students with scholar awards'. Pupils told inspectors how pleased they are with the improved facilities; an extensive

building programme is nearing completion.

You have led the school's approach to providing a broad education for all pupils very strongly. It is clear that pupils benefit from many opportunities to expand and extend their learning. For example, there is a strong emphasis on the performing arts. On the day of this inspection, the school orchestra benefited from rehearsing with a visiting professional conductor. Leaders place much value on these activities, including the participation of pupils from primary schools in the same multi-academy trust.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's leaders have ensured that there is an effective culture of keeping pupils safe from harm. Pupils are well aware about the actions they may take to minimise risks and keep themselves safe from harm. This view is supported by the conversations which inspectors had with pupils, observations made on visits to lessons and records of learning. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View also expressed the view that pupils are happy and safe.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Detailed checks are made to ensure that all employees, volunteers and any other visitors to the school are suitable to work with children. Precise records are kept and these meet all statutory requirements. All members of staff receive appropriate and regular training on matters of safeguarding and they are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Staff and pupils know how to report any matters which concern them. Pupils told us that they know where to go to share any worries that they may have. You and other leaders work closely with external agencies to support pupils and carry out any follow-up actions. Leaders' work with children who are looked after is thorough and these pupils' attendance rate is high. Documents show that the use of funding for these pupils is prioritised to match their needs well.

Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. Pupils demonstrate tolerance towards others. A few parents expressed some concerns about bullying. Pupils who met inspectors confirmed that any reported incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Records kept by the school show that incidents of bullying and discrimination are not common and are dealt with in line with the school policies.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed the areas for our key lines of enquiry. These decisions were based on information about the school's work since the previous inspection, along with your own evaluation of the school's strengths and areas requiring further development.
- We first considered the attendance rates of pupils. Leaders have continued to ensure that overall attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils clearly understand that a high attendance rate is an important preparation for

adult life and this is also reflected in the way pupils arrive promptly for lessons. A very small proportion of pupils do not attend regularly. Leaders have put in place systems to support these pupils and ensure that they are safe when not attending school. In some instances pupils have particular needs and these pupils are supported by working with other agencies, including medical services.

- Our next line of enquiry focused on pupils' progress in mathematics. Over the last three years the progress made by pupils has been in line with the national average. The most able pupils have not always been stretched to reach the highest grades. School leaders recognised that the quality of teaching and assessment in mathematics needed to be improved. In the last 18 months you have appointed a new subject leader for mathematics, and all teachers in the department have taken up their posts since September 2016.
- The new subject leader has put in place new curriculum plans for pupils. These plans ensure that pupils are developing knowledge and understanding of mathematics in a structured manner. Teachers have established new assessment methods and are able to pinpoint gaps in pupils' skills or knowledge. Specific intervention sessions have been arranged to close these gaps.
- Inspectors saw that in mathematics lessons many pupils are making secure progress and some pupils are clearly confident in their ability to take on more challenges. This improvement is evident in the school's tracking data. Some older pupils told inspectors that they now enjoy mathematics more than previously. For younger pupils, however, there were still some uncertainties and less confidence when tackling mathematical problems. Inspectors noted that younger pupils are not always clear about what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Leaders are aware of this and measures are being taken to oversee a consistent application of the school's policy about giving effective feedback to pupils.
- Additional focus has been given to accelerating the progress of the most able pupils with the goal of a higher proportion reaching the highest GCSE grades. Pupils' aspirations are being raised. For example, some older pupils have opportunities to work regularly with their peers from other schools at the Exeter Mathematics School.
- Our third line of enquiry was to review the impact of leaders' work with disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have worked on developing strategies to help these pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Class teachers are well briefed about the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils so that they are given appropriate support. The work of teaching assistants is carefully directed to give maximum impact. Leaders ensure that some funding is also available to help disadvantaged pupils to access other learning activities, such as tuition in music. As a result, over the last two years disadvantaged pupils have made better progress than other pupils nationally.
- Finally, we reviewed the work undertaken by leaders to ensure that the school's curriculum in key stage 4 prepares pupils well for their adult lives. The school has adopted an approach to the curriculum which you described as 'agile'. Clearly recognising changing requirements at a national level, leaders have taken positive steps to offer a suitable curriculum. All pupils continue to study history

or geography, and some study both. There has been a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils who study a modern foreign language with approximately 80% of pupils doing so. In addition to French, GCSE Spanish has been introduced to expand the choice. These changes have ensured that pupils are on an equal footing when they progress to further study or training.

- The science qualifications which are available to pupils have been amended and there has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who decide to study GCSEs in physics, chemistry and biology. Computer science has also increased in popularity. Examination results in physics, chemistry and biology have all been strong in recent years; pupils have responded positively to the challenge of this group of qualifications.
- Recognising that some pupils are more suited to vocational routes, you have continued to offer some qualifications which meet this need. Where necessary, pupils are offered additional support in one option. This provides a further focus on the skills which underpin progress and achievement in all other subjects. Consequently, the curriculum now offers pupils a broader range of choices and greater challenge in key stage 4.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements to teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in mathematics, are embedded consistently so that all pupils make strong 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

Ann Cox
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with you and other leaders. I had a conversation with the chair of the board of directors. We visited lessons across year groups to observe learning in a range of subjects. We looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with them about their progress. We talked informally with pupils around the school at breaktimes and at the end of the school day. One inspector held a formal meeting with a small group of pupils from each year group in the school to discuss their learning experiences. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding and attendance. We scrutinised the school's evaluation documents and the improvement plans. We looked at examples of the school's systems to track pupils' progress. We took into

account 85 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. A small number of other communications were received, and the matters raised were considered.