

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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27 January 2020

Mr Chris Hart  
Headteacher  
Carterton Community College  
Upavon Way  
Carterton  
Oxfordshire  
OX18 1BU

Dear Mr Hart

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carterton Community College**

Following my visit to your school on 16 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high in all subject areas
- make sure that content across curriculum subjects is planned and sequenced to help pupils know and remember more
- fully establish the sixth-form curriculum and clear expectations of students' attendance and study habits.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I met faculty leaders and a group of staff. I visited a range of lessons, accompanied by senior leaders, and spoke to a group of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 about their work and experience at the school. I also met a group of sixth-form students. A range of documentation was reviewed, including plans to improve the school. I met with the school's designated safeguarding leaders to discuss child protection and the school's work to support pupils and families.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection there have been a number of important changes. The previous headteacher left the school in December 2018. The school was previously part of a federation with two local primary schools. A process of defederation was completed in December 2018, which led to significant changes in leadership, governance and shared services. You were seconded to lead the school on a part-time interim basis from January 2019 and were appointed to the substantive post in September of that year. A new board of governors and chair were also appointed in September 2019.

## **Main findings**

Time was lost in the months immediately following the last inspection because changes to leadership were unsettling and slowed the pace of improvement. Since your appointment and the establishment of the current governing body, the school has become more stable. You have made sure that there are better systems in place to review the school's work. Senior leaders have direction and a clearer sense of accountability. They are now leading their teams with insight and urgency. Together, you and your team are driving up expectations of what pupils can learn and achieve. Results at the end of key stage 4 in 2019 were an improvement on those from 2018.

Governors, leaders and staff now know exactly what the strengths and weaknesses of the school are. You are realistic about how much needs to be improved in the school. You have wisely made sure that faculty and subject leaders take more responsibility for reviewing their curriculums and the quality of teaching. They have made a positive start with this work, and as a result the culture of the school is beginning to change. A greater focus on what pupils need to learn is helping to raise aspirations, not only for pupils but also for staff, some of whom previously did not believe in pupils' potential.

You have established a stronger vision of what education at Carterton should be, including in the sixth form. You and your senior team are determined that pupils will

be able to study a wide range of subjects in each key stage to open up their choices for the future. You have made productive links with local businesses, industry and the armed services to enrich school subjects. The introduction of performing arts and German as a second foreign language in key stage 3 has enhanced what had been a relatively restricted curriculum.

Subject leaders have in some cases reorganised their programmes of study to build on what pupils have learned before and to broaden their horizons. These crucial curriculum developments are most striking in mathematics, science, geography and languages. Some other subjects are not as far ahead. English has received significant amounts of support from commissioned consultants. Although there are improvements to pupils' reading diet in key stage 3, there is still much to do to build up pupils' breadth and depth of knowledge before they start GCSE studies.

Improvements to the curriculum and teaching are clearly making a positive impact on pupils. At its best, they really can see the point of what they are learning and are inspired by new information and ideas. Pupils are absorbing facts, ideas and opinions and talk about these with increasing confidence. For example, some pupils told me they believe art is in all aspects of their lives. One said, 'To me, art is life.' Other pupils talked with fascination about how their study of India and the Middle East in geography had helped them to understand crucial political and environmental concerns. Others are immersed in science, talking about the cardiovascular system and how studying physiology is contributing to their understanding of physical health. All of these examples demonstrate not only the impact of an improved curriculum, but also that your pupils are capable of achieving so much more than they have in the past.

You have successfully improved the way that teachers use assessment. Staff have a better idea of how well pupils are doing and are able to plan more effectively what they need to learn next. Nevertheless, pupils told me that they still do not feel that expectations of what they can achieve are high enough.

You and your senior team have made sure that staff have more opportunities to develop their teaching and subject knowledge. Regular training sessions, visits to other schools and use of external consultants are helping staff to look outwards, be more ambitious and achieve greater consistency. Most staff are positive about the focus on their development. However, there is more work to do to ensure that all staff are fully on board with your expectations.

You have ensured that the care given to pupils in vulnerable circumstances continues to be a strength of the school. Your drive for higher standards is not compromising typically warm and trusting relationships. You are currently reviewing the school's behaviour management approach to ensure consistency and a focus on learning.

Since the last inspection you have reviewed the sixth-form curriculum in order to meet the needs of students, encourage their ambitions and ensure that specialist teaching is in place. You rightly recognise that it is still early days for the sixth-form provision and that there is still too much variability between courses and programmes. Students told me that they value the teaching and personal help they receive. They also feel very well-supported with careers advice, including the guidance they receive about university applications. Following the last inspection, you have focused more overtly on ensuring that sixth-form students are more directly involved with the rest of the school community. However, there is still work to do to ensure that all students meet high expectations of attendance and that they are guided more explicitly about how to use their own time to study.

### **External support**

The local authority took swift action to support the school following the last inspection. School leadership and governance were strengthened. The local authority continues to provide regular monitoring, advice and guidance. External consultants and local authority advisers have been commissioned to provide focused advice for leaders and particular subjects, including English. The local authority also commissioned a safeguarding review in June 2019, which endorsed the school's approach and also recommended further improvements as best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**