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Mr Duncan Cooper
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Dear Mr Cooper

Short inspection of Bassingbourn Village College

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017 with Andy Hemmings HMI, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The leadership team has ensured that the positive ethos noted at the previous inspection continues to inform the social and academic progress of pupils. Parents are confident that the school provides their children with a good standard of education. In the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, parents commented on the dedication of staff, their 'enormous support, both academic and pastoral' and the 'highest level of caring'.

Leadership, including that of governors, is a strength of the school. Establishing a clear vision, you and your leadership team have ensured that issues such as staffing difficulties are swiftly addressed. You have embedded a culture of high expectations and aspirations which underpin the school's plans for improvement.

Governance at Bassingbourn Village College is robust. Governors gather pertinent information through regular school visits, meetings and training to ensure that their questioning is rigorous and challenging. Making clear links to the school's improvement priorities, governors' work is both supportive and demanding.

Pupils behave well both around the school and in lessons. They follow school rules attentively. They are welcoming, respectful and friendly to each other and adults. Pupils are eager to learn. They are curious about the world around them, and the broad and balanced curriculum provides many opportunities for them to develop

their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils have access to a range of vocational and academic subjects such as history, geography, Spanish, dance and construction. As a consequence, most pupils whom I spoke to had a clear understanding of their next steps in education.

You correctly assess English to be a strength of the school. Strong leadership in English has ensured that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made good progress in 2016 at the end of key stage 4. In particular, middle- and higher-ability pupils' progress was significantly above national standards. The English curriculum is well structured, enabling pupils to develop key English skills such as writing analytically about texts. I observed Year 10 pupils gaining an understanding of how to summarise key information from the text, 'The curious incident of the dog in the night-time'. As a consequence, pupils with different starting points make good progress and attain above national expectations.

You are alert to changes in pupils' progress in every area of the curriculum. You and your leadership team track pupils' progress and attainment frequently to address any emerging issues swiftly and appropriately. For example, as a result of your developments in the teaching of mathematics, outcomes at key stage 4 currently indicate improved progress for most pupils. You recognise that there are still areas in which the school needs to improve. For example, you have prioritised the continued improvement of mathematics and the achievements of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Pupils at Bassingbourn Village College are confident and articulate about the ways in which the school ensures their safety. I spoke to pupils who told me that they knew where to go if they had a problem and that they were certain that staff would help them to resolve it. You and your staff ensure that the school is a safe and supportive place for pupils to learn. Pupils also told me about the school's focus on e-safety. Pupils of all year groups were knowledgeable about how to stay safe online and why this might be important. Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children were protected and well cared for.
- Pupils were able to define bullying. Pupils told me that bullying was extremely uncommon. They told me that if it happened, staff would be quick to address the issues. School records confirm that this is the case.
- Leaders, including governors, are vigilant about the importance of checking safeguarding arrangements in school. The single central record is well maintained and kept secure. It is compliant with statutory requirements, including checks on adults who work at the school.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Test results at the end of key stage 4 in 2016 showed that

disadvantaged pupils did not make good progress in languages, humanities and mathematics. You agreed, and told me that your leadership team had already identified this as a key priority for the school.

- On visiting classrooms and talking to your leadership team, it became clear that the school was very inclusive of all pupils, regardless of their background and ability. The school subsidises trips and cultural visits for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they develop their understanding of the world around them. You and your leaders spoke of the school's strategies to raise the self-esteem and confidence of disadvantaged pupils. In Year 9, all disadvantaged pupils receive a one-to-one meeting with staff to discuss their choices for key stage 4 study. As a result, pupils engage well in lessons and strive to achieve.
- You have prioritised the progress of disadvantaged pupils through clear tracking and monitoring systems which are reviewed frequently by senior leaders. Pupils are then set challenging targets, but staff in subject-specific departments do not consistently evaluate the impact of their support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not make accelerated progress in every area of the curriculum.
- My second line of enquiry was about mathematics. This was because 2016 key stage 4 results showed that overall pupils' progress was below the national average. In addition, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was significantly below national expectations. You were disappointed with these results and took swift action. Your leadership team identified the areas of weakness and adapted the curriculum to ensure that pupils developed the critical skills for success. Mathematics teachers have developed effective strategies to address the demands of the new GCSE. As a result, my colleague and I observed strong mathematics teaching across the year groups. Pupils were engaged in learning and developing mathematical reasoning skills and problem-solving.
- I also sought to establish whether the curriculum was broad and balanced. Pupils receive robust guidance in Year 9 in preparation for their key stage 4 options. Pupils in key stage 3 experience a broad selection of subjects to inform their choices in key stage 4. For example, pupils can study languages, history, geography, dance, construction, art, health and social care, and many other subjects. Pupils who spoke to me were very enthusiastic about the subjects that they studied.
- Pupils have a broad range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their understanding of the world that they live in. For example, pupils visit Normandy as part of their French study, Berlin for GCSE history and the Norfolk coast for geography. As a consequence, pupils are eager to learn. They also demonstrate empathy and understanding of different cultures and ways of life.
- Another key line of enquiry was how well pupils are prepared to keep themselves safe. Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They are kind, respectful and welcoming of each other and staff. The curriculum supports pupils' questioning about the world that they live in and the ways in which they can keep themselves safe. For example, I observed a history lesson where pupils explored Victorian poverty in London and compared it to the dangers and experiences of modern London.
- Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved because the school is taking effective

action to address absence. Pupils are made aware of the link between achievement and school attendance. Staff track and monitor attendance and provide mentoring and additional support to pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should. As consequence, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, but is still below national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make accelerated progress across the curriculum
- disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to improve their attendance.

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 four governors.
- I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met with a group of 12 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 governor meetings; and curriculum plans.
- I considered the views of 78 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views that parents expressed via freetext.