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Mr Roger Jones
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Dear Mr Jones

Short inspection of The Hurst Community College

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019 with Matthew Haynes SHMI, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Leaders have worked well together to create an inclusive and celebratory culture evident throughout the school. The values of 'ambition, commitment, excellence and respect' are promoted well throughout the school and shared by all.

Pupils are well behaved, confident and articulate. They explain their views thoughtfully and clearly. They are proud of the active role that they are encouraged to play in shaping the school community. For example, members of the school council have worked with staff and governors to develop the new role of 'respect ambassadors'. Pupils are also very positive about the impact of the new behaviour policy and say that the focused and thoughtful behaviour that inspectors saw around the school is typical. They recognise the hard work of staff and say that they are 'always there' and 'take us seriously'.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are also very positive about the work of leaders and staff overall. Typical comments are, 'The teachers are caring, committed and passionate' and, 'They inspire and support the pupils well'.

School leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and have an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and areas to develop.

Governors are similarly dedicated and work hard to ensure that they understand the school's context and the rationale for leaders' decisions. Governors routinely audit their skills and undertake training as required. They recount how they hold leaders to account through presentations and conversations. However, the evaluations of leaders' work are not precise enough for them to understand fully its impact on pupils. For example, governors know that pupils and staff have told them that behaviour has improved, and that they have examined the information about behavioural incidents. However, there are no clear systems that allow senior staff and governors to have an overview that compares trends over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. These arrangements combine to create a culture of safeguarding throughout the school. The required checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are undertaken accurately and recorded clearly. Leaders have ensured that all staff have a secure understanding of how to identify and respond to any safeguarding worry. Leaders routinely analyse the issues faced by pupils and their families and make sure that they address these rapidly. For example, all staff have recently undertaken mental health first-aid training.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. Pupils are proud of the inclusive nature of the school and said that incidents of bullying are rare, but that staff deal with any that do happen quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident in their learning about potential risks and how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to explore how leaders support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This group, which is a small proportion of the pupils at the school, is not making as good rates of progress as other pupils. We found that leaders understand this well and are working hard to support these pupils to overcome the different barriers to learning that they experience. However, the improvements seen are not rapid enough. For example, leaders have managed to improve the attendance of some of these pupils but there is still much to do. Too many are still absent too often. Pupils who have benefited from the raft of support activities that leaders have put in place are very positive about their learning and progress. However, leaders have not clearly measured the impact of their work and the use of the pupil premium. Consequently, governors do not hold leaders to account closely enough for the use of this additional funding.
- We also considered the work that leaders are doing to improve pupils' progress in English and languages. The 2017 GCSE examination results in English were a shock to leaders and they acted quickly to identify the issues and improve provision. They worked closely with the adviser from the local authority. The 2018 GCSE examination results indicate that this work was successful. Overall, pupils' rates of progress in English are in line with those of pupils nationally. Current pupils' books in English indicate that they are supported well to develop systematically their skills of analysis when writing about texts. We also read some

impressive creative writing that demonstrated pupils' effective use of sentence and paragraph structures.

- GCSE examination results in languages have been poor in recent years and leaders have engaged the services of the local authority adviser to support improvement. Leaders have acted on the advice given and supported staff development and training. Early indications are positive, and we observed pupils using the target language carefully and with increasing confidence. Books showed that learning activities help pupils to build on learning systematically.
- Finally, we looked at the wider curriculum to assess how well pupils are prepared for their next steps and life in modern Britain. We found a very strong 'personal development learning' programme for key stage 3 pupils that is combined well with 'Learning for Life' (LfL) days, assemblies and the tutorial programme. Pupils value this learning and the wide range of topics that they cover, including 'Black History Month', 'coming out' and 'fake news'. This work supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils in key stage 4 also value the LfL days, assemblies and tutor time but they do not have the same breadth of provision as the younger pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and attendance
- increase the precision with which they measure the impact of improvements on behaviour and the effectiveness of spending of the pupil premium
- strengthen personal development learning at key stage 4 so that it matches the strong provision at key stage 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

My colleague and I met with you, senior leaders, and a group of middle leaders. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke with your local authority adviser. We visited a range of classes across the school jointly with school leaders. During these visits we observed pupils' learning, spoke with pupils and looked at work in their books. We met with two groups of pupils formally and spoke with pupils informally during breaktime. We considered 19 responses to the online pupil survey and 57 responses to the online staff questionnaire. We took

account of the 144 responses to Parent View, including 140 written contributions by parents. We also looked at a range of documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding and attendance. Additionally, we scrutinised and discussed the school's self-evaluation and development plans.