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22 September 2017

Mr Benjamin Solly
Principal
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Dear Mr Solly

Short inspection of Uppingham Community College

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2017 with Bernadette Green, 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 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. This is an exciting time for the school. Since your recent appointment, you have encouraged staff and pupils to have pride in the school and to be part of the next stage in the school's development. You and your effective leadership team are working well together, to nurture the school's strengths and plan further improvements. Your colleagues' responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire make it clear that they fully support your vision for the school.

The staff at Uppingham Community College are hardworking and dedicated to supporting the pupils. All staff model the school's core values of 'respect, honesty and kindness', creating clear expectations for pupils.

Governors ensure that pupils receive a well-rounded education. Leaders know that examinations are important, but they also make sure that pupils develop a wide range of skills and attributes. Through the well-resourced pastoral curriculum, leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to prepare for the demands of life in modern Britain. Pupils are able to choose from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which develop their confidence and leadership skills. Parents and governors told me how valuable these activities are and the contribution they make to pupils' personal growth.

Leaders have successfully responded to the areas for improvement in the last inspection report which focused on further improving the quality of teaching.

Leaders have ensured that staff work together to share their classroom skills. From our opportunities to see learning in classrooms, and in the work pupils had produced over time, it was clear that teaching is typically of a high standard.

You have been quick to see the areas where the school could do better. Already, you have produced focused plans to deal with the minor weaknesses that you have found. For example, you are aware that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in a small number of GCSE option subjects. You are working closely with subject leaders to put this right.

The leadership team is ambitious for all the school's pupils. Leaders set high targets for pupils' progress. Senior leaders are raising their expectations of the most able pupils, who already achieve similar examination results to pupils of comparable ability nationally. Leaders are determined that the numbers of pupils attaining A and A* grades will increase. This demonstrates their high ambition for the most able.

Middle and senior leaders have worked to increase pupils' progress in English so that it matches the excellent progress they make in mathematics, modern languages, science and the humanities. Your records show this work is having an impact and needs to continue.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that pupils' behaviour continues to be exemplary. Pupils' excellent conduct helps create an environment where they can learn well and thrive. Pupils trust and value their teachers; they are clear about why their learning matters. Your pupils are happy at school and this has a positive impact on their attendance, which remains very high. However, the attendance of a small number of disadvantaged pupils is too low. You are responding to this. You also intend to improve the arrangements for monitoring the use of pupil premium funding and checking the impact of this spending.

Senior leaders have introduced a school-wide approach to assessment in response to national changes. Leaders could show that assessment at key stage 4 is accurate and helps teachers plan well for pupils' needs. School leaders are aware that there is still some inconsistency in the way teachers use assessment at key stage 3. You plan further training to make sure teachers' assessments are consistent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and staff at all levels work closely together to make the school a safe place where pupils can achieve their potential. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed that their child is happy and feels safe at the school.

All staff receive regular, relevant training in child protection. Staff know what to do should they need to make a referral to the designated child protection lead. Leaders have ensured that there is good child protection practice, including a dedicated email address, where staff can bring concerns to the attention of leaders urgently.

The child protection team works well with external agencies to make sure pupils are safe. Leaders are ready to challenge delays in responses from external agencies if they feel pupils are not getting the help they need quickly enough.

You have identified the need to update your child protection policy so that it fully reflects the good practice of the school. You are dealing with this immediately. Leaders and governors also agree that they need to update the school's complaints procedures, to make it easier for members of the school community to raise concerns.

Inspection findings

- We considered how leaders make use of best practice to improve teaching and learning. Leaders have carefully researched what makes teaching effective and used this research to develop teachers' skills. The school has many talented teachers, who work together to develop their skills. Teachers use the opportunities they have to share their ideas, in groups called 'learning communities'; this has enriched the quality of teaching. Middle leaders listen carefully to the views of pupils when they judge the quality of teaching. Leaders regularly check that teacher training is making a difference to pupils' learning.
- Leaders have a strong commitment to supporting newly qualified teachers, setting high standards at an early stage in teachers' careers. The school's talented middle leaders play a significant role in developing the skills of newly qualified teachers.
- We considered leaders' actions to improve teaching in English. Strong subject leadership is driving positive change in English. In their English books, pupils present their work carefully, reflecting the high standards that leaders have set and teachers encourage. English teachers make sure pupils are well prepared for examinations, by teaching challenging texts effectively. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This helps them ask probing questions which deepen pupils' understanding.
- In the past, pupils' progress in English has been broadly average, compared to pupils' progress nationally. Leaders' records show that as a result of improved teaching, pupils are now making better progress in English. Pupils' recent GCSE examination results in English show improvement and are now higher than those of pupils nationally. As improvements in English are comparatively recent, it is important that leaders continue their focus on this area.
- We looked at leaders' work to support disadvantaged pupils. School staff understand the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face in education. Leaders have used this understanding to support disadvantaged pupils well so that, across the curriculum, they make similar progress to other pupils nationally. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive good careers advice and make realistic choices about what to do when they leave school. This means that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who stay at their placements after they leave the school has increased.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' attendance is excellent. The proportion of

pupils who are absent regularly is well below the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is too low when compared to the attendance of other pupils nationally. School leaders know this and are taking appropriate actions to raise disadvantaged pupils' attendance. Leaders' actions have already helped to reduce the number of disadvantaged pupils who are absent regularly from school.

- Governors hold leaders to account for the way they use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders' arrangements for monitoring pupil premium spending and measuring its success are not clear enough. This makes it difficult for leaders to revise spending plans and maximise the impact of the pupil premium.
- Finally, we looked at how leaders were tackling inconsistencies in pupils' examination results and progress at GCSE. Over time, some pupils' progress in a few GCSE option subjects has not been as good as it should be. This underachievement contrasts with the strong progress pupils make in many other areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders and governors value all subjects offered by the school and have made tackling inconsistencies in pupils' progress a priority. You have increased the expectations of middle leaders and are holding them closely to account for pupils' progress. Senior leaders are also supporting their colleagues well so that middle leaders have the skills they need to increase pupils' progress. Leaders' actions have had some impact on the examination results of pupils, but there is more to do to ensure that progress is consistently good in all option subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on recent improvements in English, so that pupils' progress in English matches their strong progress in mathematics, science, the humanities and languages
- pupils make better progress in the small number of option subjects where achievement is not consistently good
- they increase the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- there are clearer arrangements for monitoring pupil premium spending and for measuring the success of leaders' work to support disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Ellenor Beighton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy principals to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I held a meeting with middle leaders where we discussed the impact of their work to improve the quality of teaching. We also met with a range of other senior leaders to hear how their work was helping to improve the school. I met with governors to discuss their priorities for improving the school. My colleague spoke to a group of key stage 3 pupils about their safety, their learning and what it is like to be a pupil at this school. My colleague also spoke to other pupils, who were part of the school council, to hear their views about school life. I spoke to pupils in more relaxed situations during the day where they were free to talk openly about their experience of school. We scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and the school's own assessment of the progress it is making. We undertook observations of teaching with school leaders. We viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. My colleague also looked at pupils' work from last year to learn about pupils' progress over a longer period. I analysed the 145 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, the 143 free-text responses from parents and the 97 responses to staff questionnaires.