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Mr Alberto Otero
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Otero

Short inspection of Colton Hills Community School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 2018 with Sukhbir Farar, 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 May 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 know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. Well supported by senior leaders and governors, you address weaknesses effectively. For example, you have been successful in tackling the areas for improvement which were identified at the previous inspection. Since that time, the quality of teaching and pupils' attendance have both improved, although there is room for further improvement in both areas. You have worked hard to engage with parents, with considerable success. The great majority who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent. One summed up the views of many when they wrote, 'I am very happy with the school and the progress that my children have made.'

You have created a clear ethos summarised by the school's motto 'learn, grow and achieve together'. Staff share your vision. Almost all who completed their Ofsted inspection questionnaire said that the school is well led, and they are proud to work there. It is a harmonious, welcoming, multicultural community. Pupils are respectful, courteous and polite. They value the support which their teachers provide. They are proud of their school.

Colton Hills has a higher-than-average number of pupils joining the school at times other than the start of the academic year. You provide well for these pupils, some of whom join not long before they take examinations at the end of Year 11.

Your staff welcome them and you provide an appropriate curriculum which prepares them well for life after school.

The governing body is very committed to the school. Its members understand well the challenges which the school faces and they provide leaders with strong support. They also challenge leaders. However, on occasions they do not scrutinise school policy and practice closely enough and consequently do not hold leaders to account as effectively as they could. This is the case with policy and practice regarding attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

All pupils who spoke with inspectors during the inspection said that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is very rare and they trust staff to deal with any bullying, or other problem, they might face. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers. For example, pupils clearly understand how to protect themselves from risks that can occur when using the internet and social media.

Almost all parents who responded to Parent View said that their children feel safe in school, and almost all staff who completed their inspection questionnaire agreed.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have trained staff well in many aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, they are alert to the signs that pupils might need support and they are confident to pass on to leaders any concerns they have. Leaders deal with concerns appropriately, ensuring that pupils receive support from outside agencies when necessary. Procedures to recruit staff safely are used well. Records relating to child protection are detailed, well organised and stored securely.

Inspection findings

- The first area considered during the inspection was the progress made by pupils during key stages 3 and 4. Published GCSE outcomes improved sharply in 2017, compared with the previous year. Pupils made good progress in almost all subjects. Disadvantaged pupils fared particularly well. This improvement has been sustained. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2018 suggest similar standards to the previous year. Inspection evidence confirmed that pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make strong progress across subjects. Pupils who join the school during key stage 4, some speaking little English, make impressive progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 3 is improving. It is not as strong as in key stage 4 because teaching in key stage 3 has not been as consistently effective in recent years.
- The inspection's second focus area was on pupils' attendance. The school has a higher-than-average number of pupils who join and leave the school during the year, some from other countries. A minority of these pupils do not attend regularly. Leaders have worked hard to improve the attendance of these pupils

and of others. They identify the reasons why pupils are not attending and they support pupils, and the parents of pupils, who do not attend regularly. Leaders carefully monitor attendance and step in as soon as a pupil's attendance appears to be falling. As a result of these actions, attendance has begun to improve and persistent absence has fallen. However, attendance remains below the national average for secondary schools. Although governors consider attendance, they do not scrutinise leaders' work to improve it with as much attention to detail as they do in some other areas of school life.

- The next area considered by inspectors was pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons. The vast majority have good attitudes to learning, work hard and are keen to do well. The school is calm and orderly at breaktime, lunchtime and as pupils move between lessons. Pupils behave sensibly and with maturity. You have introduced clear expectations of teaching and behaviour and staff apply these with a good degree of consistency. Leaders carefully monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour and act quickly to support pupils who need extra help in order to behave well. As a consequence of these actions, behaviour has improved and your use of fixed-term exclusion, which was above average, has almost halved in the past two years.
- The inspection's final focus areas were on how well teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teaching is consistently strong across subjects in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers' expectations are high. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities. They provide good levels of challenge for the most able and effective support for those who find learning more difficult. Teaching in key stage 3 has been less strong in recent years. Leaders have prioritised key stage 4 and the sixth form when deploying the most effective teachers and when providing cover for absent teachers. Consequently, pupils in key stage 3 have had more temporary teachers and less strong teaching than those in the rest of the school. However, this year has seen an improving picture of teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum in key stage 3 provides a broad range of subjects that are given sufficient time to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Its breadth has recently been enhanced with the addition of more performing arts throughout Years 7 to 9. A 'nurture group' runs in key stage 3 for pupils with low starting points. A small group of teachers and other adults who have particular expertise teach these groups. Their curriculum has a particular focus on improving basic skills, including reading. This is proving effective.
- Leaders have thoughtfully designed a key stage 4 curriculum which meets pupils' needs well. The most able pupils thrive, studying academic subjects. Middle- and low-attaining pupils study some academic subjects, but they also take more practical and vocational subjects, which interest and motivate them. They achieve well. Leaders provide a highly personalised curriculum for pupils who find learning difficult, some of whom join the school during key stage 4. Their curriculum focuses on improving basic skills, practical subjects and preparation for life after school. These pupils enjoy school, achieve well from their starting points and move on to college courses when they leave Year 11.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in key stage 3 improves, so that it matches the consistently effective practice evident in key stage 4 and the sixth form
- attendance continues to improve towards the national average for secondary schools
- governors increase their scrutiny of policies and practice and so hold leaders better to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and seven governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority. We visited several classes with senior leaders, during which time we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We talked with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. We scrutinised several documents including your self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding and child protection records. Parents' views were considered through the 35 responses to Parent View, including the 14 free-text comments. We also considered the 47 responses from members of staff to their online inspection questionnaire.