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Bernadette Green
Principal
Crown Hills Community College
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Dear Ms Green

Short inspection of Crown Hills Community College

Following my visit to the school with Vondra Mays, Ofsted Inspector, on 26 January 2016, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are passionate about your school, your staff and your pupils and are rightly proud of the community school that you lead.

This is a school that refines, evaluates and asks 'what more can we do?' Leaders know the school well and have appropriately identified the areas of strength and those areas that require further improvement. Self-evaluation is, in the main, accurate and development planning is precisely focused and regularly monitored to identify whether actions are having an impact.

Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to a new site. You have a brand new building. Pupils now have an incredibly exciting and invigorating environment in which to learn and they really appreciate this. Pupils told inspectors that they felt proud and privileged to attend Crown Hills Community College. They said that it was a 'refreshing change to learn within such a vibrant space'.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly below the national average. Once in school, many make good progress. However, there remains much to do to close the achievement gap between boys and girls and to ensure that higher ability pupils make the progress that they should. There is a great deal of complexity around these issues, including the low literacy levels of some pupils who

join the school. You continue to be determined to tackle these issues and have implemented a range of imaginative strategies to ensure that these are addressed.

You and your leaders confront underperformance. You draw upon expertise within the local authority to support school improvement work. Current information would suggest that pupils' outcomes continue to improve, particularly within the core subjects of English and mathematics. Issues remain within art, modern foreign languages and humanities. Plans are in place to address these. We discussed the need to increase the pace of this improvement.

This school is rich in cultural diversity and has an extremely positive 'vibe'. You and the governing body work with the community to ensure an education that is both culturally sensitive and educationally robust. At the previous inspection, a pupil commented 'we have different cultures but the same values'. This comment remains appropriate. Pupils relish the opportunities that are offered by learning alongside people who have different experiences. They said they felt 'ahead of the game' in terms of appreciating life in modern Britain and that their learning was enhanced as a result.

Pupils are highly respectful of their new school and behave well. They are polite and cooperative during break, at lunchtime and when moving around the school. They enjoy a range of activities during these social times and are supervised in a positive manner. Those pupils spoken with appreciated the efforts taken to enrich their time out of lessons, including those opportunities for further study at breakfast and at homework clubs. In lessons, pupils respond positively to the respect they are shown by staff and behaviour is good as a result.

Safeguarding is effective

The school takes safeguarding matters extremely seriously. Staff are well trained and are clear about their responsibilities. Referrals to the local authority are pursued effectively and at the appropriate pace. Safeguarding leaders are tenacious and work well with the community and with external agencies.

Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe and that they had many members of staff that they could speak with if they needed help or support. They said that they liked the way in which they had the opportunity in dedicated lessons to learn and then discuss important social issues, such as bullying, radicalisation and domestic abuse. Pupils appreciate the open culture that allows for differences of opinion and debate. They told inspectors that it 'builds respect'. Bullying is rare and dealt with quickly and effectively if it occurs.

The governing body take seriously the safeguarding of all pupils. The governor with oversight of safeguarding is knowledgeable and well informed. As a result, leaders are appropriately held to account to ensure that pupils are safe

Inspection findings

- You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. We discussed your self-evaluation at length and I appreciated the candid nature of this discussion, particularly in relation to pupil outcomes. Plans are in place, or have been implemented, to address any weaknesses and these are appropriately monitored.
- Governors provide effective challenge to leaders. The Chair of Governors provides good support and is passionate in his belief that the 'inclusiveness of this school encourages progress'. Committee structures have been refined and extensive training has taken place. Governors are knowledgeable and are aware of the weaknesses that still need to be addressed. It is important to make sure that governors now have the evidence they need to feel confident that pupils are making the progress that they should, and that the variation in the performance across subjects is eliminated.
- You and your staff are working hard to ensure that achievement is where it needs to be. A range of strategies have been implemented to ensure that more pupils achieve five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and that boys achieve as well as girls. Many of these strategies are culturally sensitive and provide additional opportunities for study while acknowledging the religious commitments for pupils outside of the school day. Current information suggests that achievement is now reaching national levels and that gaps are closing.
- More pupils need to achieve GCSE grades at the higher levels, A* and A. Also, more pupils need to make more than the expected progress. In Year 11, you have implemented the 'League Table'. The progress that each pupil has made is ranked after each assessment point and then is published, in a similar way to a football league. One Year 11 pupil told inspectors that 'when the league was first published I hated being at the bottom. I thought there is no way I'm going to stay there! At the last assessment I was coming closer to the top. I said to myself, "now that's better"!' You have strategies in place to raise the aspirations of all pupils. There is now an urgency to ensure that learning in classrooms builds on these aspirations and is appropriately challenging.
- The tracking of pupils' progress and attainment is now more rigorous. Extensive moderation is taking place to make sure that assessment is accurate. This includes moderating with other schools within the local authority. Pupils know the GCSE targets that they are aiming for. It is important to make sure that these targets are appropriately challenging for those pupils capable of achieving more than the expected progress.

- In Year 11, extensive intervention is in place to address the skills shortfall for some pupils within subjects, particularly within English and mathematics. You told me that the approach was to 'diagnose, provide the therapy, test and then reward'. Pupils told inspectors that they really appreciated the opportunity to receive this focused intervention, particularly the one-to-one tutoring. Intervention is having impact but this is not a long-term strategy. The quality of teaching within all subjects, across all year groups needs to be of high enough quality to ensure the pupils have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve.
- You have such a vibrant school. Your pupils are hungry to learn. At times, they are not given opportunities to extend and deepen their understanding of a subject and are sometimes 'held back'. At times, pupils are going through the motions and are capable of more. More needs to be done to make sure that teaching is consistently good or better.
- The local authority has brokered and provided effective support. Your staff are involved in local authority subject hubs and in sharing practice with other schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- close the attainment gap between boys and girls
- make sure that pupils' achievement at GCSE is consistently good across all subject areas, particularly in art, humanities and modern foreign languages
- increase the percentage of pupils achieving A* to A grades at GCSE
- increase the percentage of pupils who make more than the expected progress
- provide more opportunities within lessons for pupils to extend and apply their learning.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, the chair and four members of the governing body. Inspectors visited lessons, accompanied by yourself and members of your leadership team. One inspector conducted a learning walk of the school and was accompanied by two pupils. Inspectors observed behaviour at break and lunchtime. Inspectors spoke formally with a group of Year 11 pupils and informally with pupils in lessons. A selection of documents were reviewed, including the single central record, the school self-evaluation and the school development plan. Information about pupils' progress was also discussed. Inspectors considered the views of 23 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered the views of 95 responses to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.