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Mr Robert Swindells
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Dear Mr Swindells

Short inspection of Chesterton Community Sports College

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016, with Nigel Griffiths, 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 academy opened. The predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your strong leadership, and that of the executive headteacher, has ensured that since the school opened pupils have achieved well across a range of subjects. From their below-average starting points, pupils make good or outstanding progress during their time in the school. The standards they achieve on leaving are at least average, and in some areas are significantly better than those of other pupils nationally.

At the heart of this success is the positive ethos and strong sense of community that you have shaped. The school's motto, 'to be the best you can', permeates the procedures and practices of the school. Pupils are encouraged to aim high and they value their education. This was very evident to the inspection team in pupils' good engagement with their learning in lessons. Pupils enjoy learning and are committed to achieving well. Your relentless focus on the personal development of pupils, raising aspirations and removing barriers to learning ensures that pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff at the school share your vision and ambition. They, too, are passionate in their commitment to improving pupils' outcomes. This is reflected in the warm relationships shared between staff and pupils. The care, encouragement and support that your staff offer to pupils play a crucial role in pupils' success. Leaders are a visible and 'hands-on' presence. Staff and pupils value the openness, transparency and support that you and your leadership team offer. As a result, staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school.

You monitor closely the work of the school. Your knowledge of the progress and attainment of individual pupils is impressive. You know which pupils are achieving well, and which pupils need extra help to make better progress. You make sure that pupils get the right support they need to achieve their best. However, you are not complacent. You continue to strive to improve the school's work so that pupils get the best possible outcomes.

You identify the right priorities for improvement and ensure that these inform the school improvement plan, the action plans of subject leaders and performance management arrangements. For example, you have recognised that achievements of pupils in the humanities subjects are not as strong as in other areas of the curriculum, and have undertaken effective work that is improving the quality of provision in this area. You have also identified that some pupils, particularly the most-able pupils, need to make better progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school's leaders of English and mathematics have put in place a range of measures to ensure that this group of pupils make quicker progress through their time at the school.

There is compelling evidence of the impact of leaders' work and their capacity to deliver sustained improvements. Some examples of this include:

- Improvements in pupils' attendance, so that their attendance is close to the national average, and a reduction in the numbers of pupils who are excluded from the school. This reflects the positive improvements you have made to pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and enjoyment of school.
- The excellent progress pupils have made by the time they leave the school across a range of subjects, including mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Good teaching is ensuring that current pupils in the school are continuing to make strong progress.
- The rising progress of disadvantaged pupils across a range of subjects. In their best eight subjects in 2015, disadvantaged pupils in the school made progress that was better than that of their classmates and significantly higher than the national average.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance. The range of expertise they have, coupled with a clear understanding of their role and strategic responsibilities, enables them to perform their duties efficiently. As the school has developed and sponsored another school, they have ensured that structures are in place so that the school's capacity to improve is in no way compromised. The efficacy of governors and school leaders is further demonstrated in the positive impact that they have had on the performance of the sponsored primary school.

Furthermore, the multi-academy trust arrangements have supported developments within Chesterton Community Sports College. For example, the headteacher of Churchfields Primary School has provided effective strategic guidance in the development of safeguarding provision at the school. The enhanced knowledge that leaders and teachers have of the primary phase has enabled them to ensure that the curriculum offered at Key Stage 3 enables pupils to build efficiently on the skills, knowledge and understanding that they have acquired by the end of Key Stage 2.

Your engagement with parents, including through the innovative 'parent portal', is strong. As a result, the school is a popular choice and is well regarded by parents, who value the range of support and opportunities that the school offers their children. Partnerships, such as those with teacher training providers and local universities, further enhance the school's work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding fulfils statutory requirements. Robust policy provides a secure framework and clear guidance for staff. Staff at the school are equipped with the knowledge they need to identify when pupils may be vulnerable or at risk, and understand how to report any concerns. Effective work with families, the local authority and other agencies ensures that any pupils who are identified as at risk are kept safe. Leaders evaluate policy and practice in order to respond to any relevant issues that may arise in the local community so that staff and pupils are alert to these.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand the dangers of using the internet, social media, gang culture, and drugs and alcohol. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They trust members of staff to help them if they have any concerns. As a result, they feel safe and secure when at the school. However, while featured in programmes of study, pupils lack a deep understanding of the dangers of extremism. Although planned for the near future, not all staff have received 'Prevent' training. This is an area for further development.

Inspection findings

- Pupils start at the school with attainment that is well below average. By the time they leave, they attain standards in their GCSE examinations that are at least in line with, and often better than, the national average. This is because they make good or outstanding progress in a range of subjects. For example, the progress pupils made in their best eight subjects, in mathematics and in science was within the top 10% of schools nationally in 2015. Information about the performance of current pupils shows that they are continuing to make strong progress.
- Although progress in the humanities subjects has been broadly in line with that of other schools nationally, leaders have recognised that pupils do not achieve as well in these subjects as they do in other areas of the curriculum. Effective work to improve teaching and better subject leadership of this area are now bringing about better progress for current pupils. A range of enrichment activities are successfully promoting greater pupil engagement. However, there

remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in this area.

- Most groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good or better progress. Some of the most-able pupils, however, do not achieve as well as they could and do not secure the highest grades, including in English and mathematics. Leaders have identified this issue and have ensured that this features prominently in the school development plan and in the action plans of subject leaders. Leaders have identified that a lack of challenge in the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3, has inhibited pupils' progress over time. Programmes of study have been rewritten to ensure that pupils cover more demanding work in order to make the rapid gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding they need to achieve well.
- Leaders at all levels track and monitor the progress of pupils closely. As a result, they are able to identify any pupils who may be falling behind and put in place extra help in order to support pupils to meet their targets. Pupils value the feedback they receive about their progress so that they know what areas they need to work on further to improve.
- Leaders analyse information about the school's performance to identify the right priorities for improvements. Sometimes, these plans do not set out sharply measurable targets so that leaders can gauge the extent to which their actions have made a difference to pupils' learning and progress. This impedes some leaders' abilities to articulate the impact of their work.
- Teaching is good and improving. Strong leadership of teaching ensures that staff are guided and supported well in developing their practice. Close links with universities and teacher training providers have resulted in a number of talented teachers joining the school staff.
- Where pupils' learning is strongest, teachers use their expert subject knowledge to plan well-structured lessons that ensure that pupils focus on the skills they need to succeed. Teachers explain difficult concepts with clarity, and design activities that capture and sustain pupils' interest. For example, in an English lesson the teacher used a well-chosen media clip to get pupils to consider the themes of a challenging text. This stimulated thoughtful discussion between pupils and perceptive interpretations of the poem they were studying.
- Where pupils' progress is slower, teachers' questioning does not probe or extend pupils' learning in sufficient depth. Consequently, pupils demonstrate a superficial understanding that is accepted too readily and not deepened. Activities that are planned to challenge the most-able pupils have a variable impact. Some pupils are not directed quickly to these tasks and spend too long on tasks that are too easy.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are often excellent. Praise and encouragement fosters pupils' good attitudes to learning in lessons. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers, are keen to learn and aspire to do well. Pupils conduct themselves in a sensible and orderly manner around the school site, including during break and lunchtime. Pupils are respectful to adults and to one another. Pupils told inspectors that they are happy and enjoy coming to school.
- A number of strategies are in place to work with individuals whose attendance or behaviour does not meet expectations. The successful impact of this work is evident in pupils' improving rates of attendance over time, and a reduction in the number of pupils who are excluded from the school. However, although

improving, the attendance of pupils with special educational needs or disability and that of disadvantaged pupils does not match that of their classmates or peers nationally.

- Pupils' personal development is afforded a high priority in the school. Personal, social, health and careers education, assemblies, visitors, a range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities promote pupils' aspirations and acquisition of wider skills very effectively. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The success of this work is further reflected in pupils' high rates of progression to the next stage of their learning on leaving the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they raise the achievement of the most-able pupils in the academy so that more pupils secure the highest grades by:
 - checking pupils' learning carefully in lessons in order to move pupils on to more demanding work when they are ready
 - asking questions that challenge, extend and deepen pupils' thinking and learning
- gaps in pupils' progress and attainment across subject areas, particularly the humanities subjects are closed, so that pupils make rapid progress across the curriculum
- plans for improvement set out measurable criteria against which the success of leaders' strategies and actions can be checked and evaluated, so that leaders are sharply focused on the difference their actions make and can be robustly held to account
- strategies to raise the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with disabilities or special education needs are carefully evaluated and built upon in order that the attendance of these pupils matches that of others in the academy and other pupils nationally
- staff and pupils develop a deeper understanding of the risks of extremism.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Education for Staffordshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, as the headteacher, the executive headteacher and members of your senior leadership team. Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and during the school day, and also met formally with a group of pupils. Additional meetings were held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and subject leaders. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons with leaders and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection. Additional documentation was analysed, including reports to governors, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of the progress and attainment of current pupils in the school and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare. Inspectors also considered 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).