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Dr Kevin Bawn
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Dear Dr Bawn

Short inspection of Clyst Vale Community College

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2018 with Jenny Maraspin OI, 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 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, your school has undergone some significant changes. A falling roll, especially in the sixth form, has led to a number of changes to the structure of your senior leadership team, which has reduced in size. Nonetheless, this has produced some positive impacts in terms of clarity of roles in that team. Governors report that areas of responsibility and lines of accountability are now clearer. This enables them to exercise their duty of oversight more effectively.

Despite its reducing size, you and the governors remain resolutely committed to preserving post-16 education on the school site. You have a clear moral purpose in this, seeking to ensure that the sixth form meets both the needs of the local community and of students who prefer to study at the school rather than go on to college. Nevertheless, as you and governors openly acknowledge, the arrangements for how the post-16 provision is led and managed require further development.

At the time of the previous inspection in 2015, a number of areas for improvement were identified in order to move the school forward. School leaders have not been successful in tackling all of these areas. In particular, the performance of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 remains a concern. While pupils overall in 2017 made progress in line with the national average, the progress of disadvantaged

pupils was much worse. The additional funding the school receives for these pupils is not being used effectively to improve their achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a well-developed and secure culture of safeguarding and the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This effective culture of safeguarding is sustained through regular training and updates for staff. This means that staff are well prepared to act vigilantly to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of key safeguarding concerns, such as child sexual exploitation or the risks posed by radicalisation and political extremism. The safeguarding arrangements are integrated well with the school's pastoral structure. The school is divided into three smaller houses or 'schools', and the leaders of these act as deputy designated safeguarding leads.

The school's view of its role in keeping pupils safe covers all aspects of their welfare, including their mental health. For example, the school has recently worked on a pilot scheme with local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and the University of Exeter. This project, called 'living life to the full', focused on providing early help for any pupils with mental health problems. Research by the university indicates that it is having a positive effect on helping pupils improve their mental health.

As a result of the effective culture of safeguarding, pupils are safe and feel safe. They talk articulately about the help they have been given to stay safe, including when they are online or using mobile devices.

Inspection findings

- The inspection's first line of enquiry looked at the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. In four out of the last five years at key stage 4, disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils with similar starting points nationally. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' average progress was equivalent to achieving a grade below other similar pupils. This represented a decline from 2016.
- School leaders, including governors, have not been quick enough to tackle this situation. Only since the poor results in 2017 has greater urgency been injected into their work to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Although there are some indicators in pupils' work and the school's assessment information that progress for these pupils is improving, many initiatives have yet to have a significant impact. For example, the school has tended in the past to focus on interventions to support disadvantaged pupils during key stage 4. Rightly, leaders and governors are now trying to target help for disadvantaged pupils from earlier on in their school careers. The impact of this change of emphasis is not yet evident.
- The second line of enquiry followed by inspectors concerned progress in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils. For the last two years at GCSE,

the school's high prior-attaining pupils made significantly less progress in mathematics than similar pupils nationally. Their progress improved slightly in 2017 but remains in the bottom 30% of schools nationally.

- The work of current pupils in mathematics indicates that, while the level of work might be set at the appropriate level, teaching is not successfully developing a deeper conceptual understanding, especially for the most able. Pupils sometimes struggle to apply concepts to new or unfamiliar contexts. Some students studying mathematics in the sixth form stated that they struggled moving from GCSE to A-level mathematics because their conceptual understanding was underdeveloped.
- Our third line of enquiry looked at the school's post-16 provision. The school has a relatively small number of entries for vocational courses, but students who take these courses make progress in line with other pupils nationally. For students taking A levels, however, the picture is different. In the past, their progress has been significantly above the national average. In 2017, however, the progress made by students, especially the most able, was significantly below the national average and in the bottom 20% of schools. Progress in geography and history was particularly weak.
- The fall in the size of the sixth form, and reduced funding, has resulted in a restructuring of its leadership, which is now the responsibility of a middle leader, in place since September 2017. She has a very clear understanding of the issues facing the sixth form and has some promising ideas about how to tackle them. Her capacity to bring about positive change is limited, however, by the lack of time she has available to focus on her new role. You and the governors recognise this and are proposing to review the current arrangements.
- Teachers in the sixth form demonstrate good subject knowledge. They use this well to engage in high-level discussion with students, especially some of the most able. This was seen in geography, history and mathematics lessons. However, strategies used by teachers to assess the ongoing progress of those pupils who were reluctant to engage in these discussions are less effective. Nonetheless, students in the sixth form state that they do get help from teachers to improve their work, particularly in English.
- The inspection's final line of enquiry looked at attendance. Overall attendance has declined recently and in 2017 was significantly below the national average. This has been accompanied by a rise in the levels of persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Over 30% of disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent in 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- The school's work to improve attendance is not having the desired impact. Attendance up to Easter this year has not improved and persistent absence remains too high. School leaders point to a number of contextual factors with this year's cohort. However, this is a situation that has been going on for some years with little or no improvement. The high rate of absence for disadvantaged pupils is particularly worrying, especially in the context of the poor progress they have made in recent years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils more precisely, so that their progress improves rapidly
- the teaching of mathematics improves, especially for the most able, so that pupils develop a deeper conceptual understanding and a better ability to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts
- the capacity of the new leadership of the sixth form to bring about improvement is enhanced, including by providing it with enough time to implement new initiatives
- rates of absence and persistent absence reduce quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders at the start of the day to discuss the school and to draw up the inspection's key lines of enquiry. The inspection team visited lessons, accompanied by senior leaders, where they examined pupils' work and talked with them about their learning. During the day, inspectors had meetings with staff, governors and pupils from all key stages in the school. Inspectors also examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including safeguarding records and information about pupils' current progress. In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 37 responses to Parent View, 51 responses to the pupil survey and 43 responses to the staff survey.