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Mr Harry Kutty
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Dear Mr Harry Kutty

Short inspection of Cantell School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2017 with Catherine Davies, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong and determined leadership aimed at ensuring high-quality education for every pupil regardless of their ability or circumstance. You are tenacious in your pursuit of excellence while balancing your drive with the well-being of staff and pupils. Your staff share your vision and work very hard to maintain the school's many strengths and to improve the school further. There is a caring and stimulating ethos in the school, which enables pupils to make strong progress and achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are kind and respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of the environment. They appreciate the wide range of clubs and other activities on offer. This includes a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical, artistic and dramatic talents. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance. The attendance of most disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving rapidly.

Leaders use meticulous systems to access and track pupils' progress regularly. This ensures that any pupil at risk of falling behind is quickly spotted. Leaders identify

precisely the reasons why pupils may find learning difficult and, as a result, support is prompt and useful and helps these pupils achieve well. For example, pupils who find reading examination questions difficult are given appropriate help and, as a result, they can tackle examinations with greater confidence and achieve better.

Leaders effectively monitor the quality of teaching and the impact it has on the progress of pupils. As a result, leaders know the many strengths of the school, including the strong progress made by pupils in English and mathematics. You also know where you can make further improvement, such as helping the most able pupils to make the same strong progress as other pupils.

Governors know the school very well and provide strong challenge and support to you and other leaders. Morale among pupils and teachers is high at your inclusive school. Everyone shares your ambition that pupils achieve their very best and develop into well-rounded citizens. Parents speak very highly of the school and almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff and governors are trained on how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Before appointing staff, leaders carry out all required employment checks. These are then recorded meticulously on the single central register.

A dedicated team of staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside pupils, parents and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents say their children feel safe and are well cared for in school. Pupils told us that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being.

There is a strong culture of vigilance and support for pupils' health, welfare and well-being. Staff are knowledgeable about procedures and practices because they receive regular training and updates. The school's off-site activities are carefully monitored and assessed for risk, and leaders keep pupils' safety under close scrutiny.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors focused on the following lines of enquiry: the effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils; how well pupils are prepared for next steps; how effective staff training is in improving pupils' achievement; and how effectively teachers plan for the needs of pupils, particularly girls at the school.
- You have a thorough understanding of the varying needs and abilities of the

pupils at your school. As a result, you keep the curriculum under review so you can respond promptly to the needs of different groups of pupils. For example, you provide a bespoke curriculum for pupils who have recently arrived in the country and for pupils whose prior school experience has been disrupted. As a result, pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable now make rapid progress because they are taught effectively and are well supported in their personal development.

- You have correctly identified that some pupils would be better prepared for their next steps if they followed a more challenging curriculum. You have acted purposefully to ensure that the curriculum and teaching provide more effectively for the most able and middle-attaining pupils. Teachers are providing more useful support for pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to experience success in challenging GCSE subjects. For example, the number of pupils successfully taking a GCSE science course and a modern foreign language is increasing.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education or training. Teachers and careers advisers work sensitively with parents to guide pupils' subject choices. As a result, pupils make choices well matched to their abilities and they are appropriately prepared for a wide range of opportunities when they leave school. Careers education is strongly promoted from Year 7. Pupils told us they value the annual careers fair and talks by visitors about different jobs and professions. Leaders continue to support pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, once they have left the school. As a result, pupils successfully transfer to a wide range of courses or training at the end of Year 11.
- At the last inspection, the leaders were asked to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress in all lessons and all subjects. Since then, leaders have developed innovative and highly effective approaches to training and developing teachers' skills. This training helps teachers plan effectively for the needs of pupils of varying abilities. Pupils now make more consistent progress in all subjects. However, leaders are not complacent and recognise that further improvement is possible.
- Leaders and teachers provide well for all pupils, particularly for girls in the school. School leaders provide a curriculum and pastoral care which encourage girls to be fully involved in all aspects of school life. For example, girls are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities and some girl-only activities. As a result, girls make strong progress and develop a determination to succeed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strong teaching that exists in most areas is firmly embedded so that all groups make sustained and substantial progress
- work already well underway to provide a curriculum which challenges all pupils continues.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Turner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, leaders, governors and staff. We spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally. We visited classes to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We observed pupils at breaktime, at lunchtime and as they left school. We considered documentary evidence, including that related to safeguarding, attendance, progress of current pupils and the work of governors. We took account of 44 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the outcomes of a staff survey.