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Mr Jim Stavrou
Headteacher
Swavesey Village College
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Dear Mr Stavrou

No formal designation inspection of Swavesey Village College

Following my visit with Liz Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Gerard Batty, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 25–26 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the quality of education.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders, the special needs coordinator, members of the academy council (the school's local governing body), trustees and the chief executive officer of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (the trust).

Inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum. They visited lessons with subject leaders and senior leaders. This included a range of subjects across key stage 3 and key stage 4. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning. We gathered pupils' views about the school. Meetings were held with teachers to discuss teaching, learning, workload and their well-being. The lead inspector also met with newly qualified teachers and trainees to gather their views on the school and the support that they receive.

Inspectors reviewed records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They spoke to pupils and staff to gain their views on behaviour and the quality of education. Inspectors considered 1143 responses to a pupil survey conducted by the school between September and October 2019. They considered the 176 responses to the online questionnaire Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 132 responses to the school's own most recent parental questionnaires. The lead inspector spoke with a small group of parents and carers before school on the second day of the inspection to gather their views on the school.

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the designated safeguarding leader, senior leaders, governors, trust representatives and staff to discuss safeguarding procedures. Inspectors also discussed with pupils how and when they learn to stay safe.

Context

Swavesey Village College is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school with 1292 pupils on roll. Pupils join in Year 7 and leave at the end of Year 11. Very few pupils join and/or leave the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is small and in the lowest 20% of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is in line with the national average. The number of pupils with SEND not in receipt of an EHC plan is below average and in the lowest 20% nationally.

The school was judged to be outstanding at its previous inspection in 2011. Since then, the school has converted to become an academy. It was a founding member of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust. The current headteacher has been in post since 2018 but was working at the school when it was previously inspected. The school is part of Cambridge Teaching Schools Network, which provides training and initial teacher education across Cambridgeshire.

Main Findings

Leaders, trustees and governors have ensured that the school continues to provide an outstanding quality of education.

Leaders have constructed a curriculum that provides for pupils' academic and personal development exceptionally well. It is adapted to meet individual pupils' needs. Pupils join the school typically having achieved the expected standards by the end of Year 6. Due to very effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum, pupils make very strong progress across a range of subjects. Pupils achieve highly by the end of key stage 4. Pupils gain the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to progress successfully to further study, training or employment.

Curriculum leaders have carefully considered what pupils need to learn in each subject. Teaching is well planned, so that pupils remember and build on what they learn. Leaders have thoughtfully chosen content and planned sequences of learning in a range of interesting contexts that capture and build upon pupils' interest. This capitalises on pupils' positive attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and produce high-quality work. In key stage 3 art, for example, pupils study a wide range of artists and art from different cultures. The quality of pupils' art work is beyond that typical for their age. This is by no means unique to art.

Leaders have chosen that pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects until the end of Year 8. In Year 9, pupils begin their key stage 4 examination courses. Leaders make sure that pupils consolidate and build upon knowledge from key stage 3 and experience learning that extends beyond the scope of the national curriculum or examination syllabus. Pupils are positive about how this helps their learning and confidence. In English, for example, pupils read texts beyond the English literary heritage. They build their confidence with older literature texts through analysing texts from different perspectives. A much higher proportion of pupils are entered for the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate than is typical nationally. This has been a deliberate choice by leaders, who recognise the benefits of a broad, academic education. However, leaders have ensured that vocational pathways are also available for pupils. Pupils appreciate the range of options available to them. They are well advised regarding subject choices and opportunities available when they leave the school. Leaders make effective use of links with businesses, employers and education providers. A comprehensive careers information and guidance programme is in place. Pupils achieve highly across the curriculum and are extremely well prepared for the next steps in their education or employment.

Teachers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and highly skilled practitioners. They appreciate the freedom that they have to teach in the way that works best for their pupils. Teachers use assessment particularly well to inform their planning and support pupils' learning and progress. Pupils benefit from teachers' precise guidance that enables them to improve the quality of their work. Pupils can also accurately evaluate the quality of their own work and that of others. Teachers model very well the standards pupils need to achieve to reach higher levels of attainment. They successfully encourage and enthuse pupils to aim high and fulfil their potential. This includes disadvantaged pupils, for whom expectations and ambitions are equally high. Staff ensure that pupils can access all learning opportunities and receive any additional help that they need. This ensures that, by the end of key stage 4, disadvantaged pupils' achievement is in line with that of other pupils nationally and is improving.

Teachers ensure that they adapt the curriculum to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. Extra help is provided for those pupils who need it. This is effective in helping pupils with

SEND develop confidence and independence and participate fully in school life. Pupils with SEND complete work to the same standards and make the same strong progress as others.

Pupils develop and demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, they participate enthusiastically, are attentive and work collaboratively with others. Pupils demonstrate similarly strong, respectful relationships outside of lessons. Staff and pupils have the same high expectations of behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. They are dealt with appropriately. The small number of pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour receive appropriate support to help them do so. Leaders' work to support attendance is effective. They monitor pupils' attendance closely, rewarding high or improving attendance. Pupils attend regularly, and few are frequently absent. Leaders have improved the attendance of pupils who have had previously low attendance.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development exceptionally well. Pupils appreciate the 'values and experiences days', where they undertake workshops on topical issues and benefit from wider life skills. These days supplement a well-planned programme of assemblies and form tutor activities. The school's 'PLEDGES' programme involves pupils in community work and participation in activities that develop qualities and skills beyond those taught in the academic curriculum. In addition to many opportunities for responsibility, there are a wealth of sporting, cultural and artistic opportunities available for pupils. These are very popular. Leaders ensure that the most disadvantaged pupils can participate in these activities. A programme of alternative, individualised provision is in place for a small group of pupils. Leaders ensure these pupils get the support they need to remain engaged in education. Pupils spoke extremely positively about the support they receive through the house system. They say there is always someone they can turn to in times of need and a strong sense of community in the school.

Leaders look carefully at what works well and what does not. They act swiftly to remedy areas of weakness. They explored the reasons for dips in examination outcomes in languages and geography in 2018. Appropriate, thoughtful actions ensured a return to previously high achievement in these subjects in 2019.

Staff members feel highly valued and well supported by leaders. They appreciate actions leaders have taken to consider staff well-being and help with work-life balance. Teachers, including those new to teaching, have many high-quality opportunities to enhance their subject knowledge and review their practice. They have access to the latest educational research and share the ideas of what works with each other. The trust provides opportunities for leaders and teachers to share ideas and develop their practice, for example through subject groups. The trust and governors ensure that all decisions are made in pupils' best interests. They have established a culture where leaders and teachers are aiming for the highest standards in all respects.

A significant minority of responses to the online questionnaire Ofsted Parent View were negative about aspects of the school's work. These concerns were not borne out by inspection evidence. Leaders, the trust and governors take parental concerns seriously. They acknowledge that improving some aspects of communication would have avoided some negative perceptions, for example those arising from changes to uniform. Actions are in place to rectify this situation.

Safeguarding remains effective. Leaders, trustees and governors fulfil their statutory duties well. Regular training and weekly briefings mean staff are vigilant and can recognise signs that pupils are at risk of harm. Staff are confident to raise concerns, which are acted upon swiftly. Leaders involve external agencies when needed in a timely fashion, ensuring that pupils and their families get any help that they need. Pupils feel safe. They can talk about how they learn about risks, such as inappropriate use of technology and substance misuse. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that they include potential and emerging risks, such as criminal exploitation, in pupils' learning and staff training.

External support

Leaders work with other schools and external providers to provide support and training. This has helped subject leaders and teachers to develop further their knowledge, skills and expertise.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the actions taken to improve those aspects of communication with parents that have been identified as less effective are successful in ensuring all parents feel well informed and are fully supportive of the school's work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector