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Mrs Anna Dawson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dawson

Short inspection of Samuel Cody Specialist Sports College

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2017 with Hilary Goddard, 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 May 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 have created a culture in which pupils are supported to achieve socially, emotionally and academically. Your belief that 'safe, secure, happy children will learn' is shared by your team and governors, all of whom work hard with pupils and their families to realise this vision. Staff and pupils have very strong working relationships and, as a result, pupils are happy and successful, making good progress from their starting points.

You are determined to prepare pupils well to achieve happy and successful futures that are right for them. You have designed a curriculum that matches their needs and allows them to attain qualifications alongside life skills, for example through financial education and work experience. Many pupils stay after school to take part in one of the many clubs and activities, including a variety of sports, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and the parent and child cooking club. Pupils also enjoy the many trips and residential activities, including overseas visits.

Pupils enjoy school and behave well in lessons and around the school. They are happy and make good progress, especially in terms of their self-confidence and self-esteem. Many parents commented on this. Typical comments included: 'My child is finally happy at school since attending Samuel Cody' and, 'Since starting, my son

has flourished and has come on leaps and bounds in his education, behaviour and emotional well-being.'

You have maintained the many strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection report and have addressed the areas for improvement. For example, staff support pupils to recognise when feedback has been given that will help them to make progress. You routinely review and refine your work, including your approach to tracking pupils' progress and feedback to pupils. You have identified the need to refine your current assessment systems further so that it is easier to evaluate the impact of your work. You have a good understanding of the current strengths of the school and recognise that teachers should further develop their approaches to improving pupils' writing in all subjects. You make some good use of additional funding, including that for disadvantaged pupils. However, along with governors, you understand the need to evaluate the effectiveness of your use of this funding more closely.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities and the processes to follow should they have any concerns. They are vigilant and alert to any sign that a pupil might be at risk. They work very effectively with parents and external agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils feel safe. They appreciate the time staff spend helping them learn how to stay safe, especially when online. Their weekly 'safety' lessons have been very effective in raising their awareness and ability to keep safe from dangers, including online grooming. Pupils particularly like the family workshops where they learn alongside their parents and agree rules for online safety.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I explored the steps leaders have taken to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders have established secure and effective relationships with families. These relationships have helped to improve attendance for all pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents and pupils trust staff and have responded very well to the school's high expectations for attendance. Pupils enjoy the challenge between tutor groups to see who can record the best attendance as a group and therefore win the competition to 'climb Everest' first. As with so much of the school's work, these activities have been successful because the pupils are nurtured, feel safe, and are happy to come to school. They recognise the progress that they make when they attend regularly. Attendance has risen rapidly due to these productive measures.
- I considered the progress that pupils make from their starting points and found that most pupils are making good progress across the curriculum overall. School leaders routinely track the progress of pupils through a range of monitoring

activities, including learning walks and scrutiny of work. They discuss pupils' achievements with teachers, making sure that any individual concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Teachers know their pupils very well and set targets that are usually of appropriate challenge. Leaders are aware of the need to refine their formal assessment system further so that they are able to evaluate more easily the difference their work is making. Following the inspection activities, leaders also understand the need for teachers to further develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

- I also examined how well pupils are supported to move on to their next steps and succeed in modern British society. Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive in their recognition of the progress pupils have made during their time at Samuel Cody. Pupils' 'leaving speeches' movingly document their many achievements. Staff and governors are passionate about enabling pupils to move on to happy and successful futures. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully to support pupils to develop the skills they need for their next steps. Academic learning is balanced with high-quality personal, social and emotional development. All pupils are supported to move onto post-16 pathways that match their needs and interests. Leaders are innovative in finding and creating opportunities that allow pupils to succeed.
- The governing body has undergone many changes recently so I considered how effectively they fulfil their statutory obligations. Records of the work of governors, together with my discussions with them, indicate that they have rapidly increased their effectiveness over recent years. I found that governors are highly motivated and ambitious for the school and its pupils. They have undertaken training to enable them to hold leaders to account more effectively. They have made good progress with this but recognise that there is more to do, especially regarding their scrutiny of how leaders evaluate the use of additional funding. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school. For example, a governor always attends the school council meetings to make sure that governors understand and take account of pupils' viewpoints when planning for school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors continue to increase their rigour in holding leaders to account, including checking how leaders make use of additional funding
- leaders refine the assessment system further to enable them to evaluate more efficiently the difference their work is making in driving up standards
- teachers improve pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you and the school leadership team, other members of school staff, and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with your local authority adviser. Together with you and the leadership team, we planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We visited a range of classes covering all year groups, to observe pupils' learning, speak with them, and look in their books. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with a member of the leadership team. We also spoke with pupils at break and met a group formally during the day. We looked at all the responses to the school's pupil questionnaire and considered 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 21 written contributions by parents. We took account of 56 responses to the online staff questionnaire. We looked at a range of documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. We also scrutinised and discussed the school's tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.