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Mrs B Mabey
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mabey

Short inspection of Washwood Heath Academy

Following my visit with Russell Hinton, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 3 March 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This academy continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the academy since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, the school has become an academy and now is part of the Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust (WHMAT). You have become executive headteacher of WHMAT and Washwood Heath Academy is now led by Mrs H McLachlan, who is head of academy.

The previous inspection report identified good and outstanding teaching and high expectations of pupils. The report also praised pupils' behaviour, how rigorously the senior leadership team monitored progress and tackled weaknesses and the governors' range of experience. These features remain of very high quality in the academy.

However, the previous report directed the school to raise achievement further by strengthening subject leadership and the skills to accurately evaluate the quality of lessons. Since the last inspection, leaders have addressed these areas effectively. For example, senior leaders implemented a successful 'rapid improvement plan' in the humanities department, resulting in strong and sustained improvements in pupil progress. A similar strategy, and with increased leadership capacity following the recent appointment of a head of department, is starting to improve outcomes within modern foreign languages this year. Senior and subject leaders make frequent checks on teachers' performance, which they judge accurately, and there have been improvements in the quality of teaching within the academy.

The leadership team and multi-academy trust are ambitious for pupils, including learners in the sixth form. Leaders ensure that there are high expectations about achievement, behaviour and respect and tolerance for others. Staff in the academy are strongly committed to meeting its aims. Staff are highly supportive of the academy's leaders and feel well supported. Pupils in the main school and learners in the sixth form are personable and proud of their achievements and the academy. This is reflected in how keen they were to engage with inspectors about their work and how smartly they dress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and meet all statutory requirements. For example, rigorous and systematic vetting procedures take place when staff are recruited, resulting in a comprehensive record of proper checks that ensure that appropriate adults work at the academy. Relevant and up-to-date training, including 'Prevent' training, ensures that staff and governors are well aware of their responsibility to ensure that pupils and learners are safe and well looked after. As a result, staff understand what to do if they have a concern about the safety or welfare of pupils and learners. Key leaders make timely and appropriate use of other organisations in response to concerns. Staff say that they are confident in the academy's work to keep everyone safe.

Safeguarding and related issues are carefully threaded throughout the curriculum to ensure that pupils and learners are fully aware of how to keep themselves safe. The academy successfully ensures that pupils and learners have awareness of issues such as risks from extremism, child sexual exploitation, forced marriage and those potentially involving the internet. Pupils and learners say that there are adults in the academy who would help them, if needs be. Parents feel that their children are well cared for and safe when at the academy.

Inspection findings

- Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching in the academy and identify that, over time, more teaching is outstanding. Lesson observations shared by leaders and inspectors during the inspection resulted in similar strengths and areas for development being identified. Academy leaders are accurate in their observations and judgements regarding the quality of teaching. Teachers benefit from opportunities to develop their teaching skills and coaching and support plans are available if required.
- Leaders have taken effective and successful action to narrow the gap between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the academy and nationally. In 2015, a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils made at least expected progress in English and mathematics than other pupils in the academy. Additionally, in English, disadvantaged pupils' progress exceeded that of all pupils nationally.
- Governors are totally committed to maintaining current strengths and further improving the academy and its culture and ethos. They receive good training and are well informed about the performance of the academy. As a result,

governors are well equipped to challenge academy leaders effectively and represent the needs and interests of all groups of pupils.

- Pupils' progress in humanities has improved significantly since the last inspection. Progress across a range of subjects is now at least broadly average. However, there has been less improvement in progress in modern foreign languages and this remains a key priority for academy leaders.
- In 2015 a greater proportion of pupils in the academy made at least the progress that they should in English at the end of Key Stage 4 when compared to all pupils nationally. However, the proportion of pupils in the academy making at least the progress that they should in mathematics was lower than for all pupils nationally.
- The proportion of pupils achieving at least five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, fell in 2015. This was lower than the national average, reflecting the below-average starting points of these pupils when they joined the academy in Year 7. The academy's internal assessment information indicates that changes to the types of qualifications and optional subjects available for pupils will ensure that this trend is reversed in the future.
- The proportion of most-able pupils achieving at least five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, in 2015 was higher than the national average. The most-able pupils in the academy achieved GCSE grades that were similar to the most-able pupils nationally across a range of subjects. Similar outcomes are expected for the most-able pupils currently at the academy.
- Teachers use information well about how pupils are doing to plan lessons. In the teaching observed during our visit, many pupils and learners were engaged because teachers provided work that challenged them to achieve well and make the progress they are capable of. Teachers plan tasks that encourage and challenge pupils and learners to work independently and with their peers. Older pupils and sixth-form learners respond well to these activities and demonstrate effective learning. However, younger pupils show less resilience and confidence to work independently on tasks without further explanation or reassurance from their teachers.
- Absence rates for all pupils are among some of the highest nationally and have been so for some time. Leaders can identify causes of absence, and are working well with pupils and their families to improve attendance. Effective actions have improved the attendance of younger pupils in the academy this year, but these have had more limited success with pupils currently in Year 11. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability are still more likely to be absent from the academy than their peers.
- Pupils and learners are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the widespread promotion of fundamental British values. Pupils and learners participate enthusiastically in enrichment activities that complement opportunities mapped throughout the curriculum. As a result, pupils and learners are eager to contribute to society and stated that understanding fundamental British values is important to them.
- Teachers provide high-quality opportunities for pupils and learners to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. These opportunities are found throughout the curriculum and through participation in a range of extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils and learners demonstrate tolerance and

respect of differences, alongside a keen interest to understand people who are from other faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

- The sixth form meets the 16 to 19 study programme requirements. Recently, academy leaders have widened the types of qualifications and range of subjects available in the sixth form. Leaders focus on ensuring that learners develop academically, socially and emotionally. All learners who start the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or above in English or mathematics are required to follow a course to improve their grade, but they are not always successful. You and your team have rightly identified this issue as a priority.
- Sixth-form learners receive high-quality careers information, advice and guidance so are thoroughly prepared for their futures. The proportion of learners who progress to higher education is increasing, reflecting increased numbers who study academic qualifications. Those learners who do not progress to higher education move onto appropriate other courses, apprenticeships or employment. Learners' aspirations to achieve at the highest level are constantly rising.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they tackle variations in outcomes, for example, in modern foreign languages, so that they are at least good across all subject areas
- prompt action is taken to effectively improve attendance for all groups of pupils, especially pupils currently in Year 11, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability
- younger pupils more rapidly develop the confidence and resilience to work independently in lessons.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met you, the head of academy and other senior leaders, including the designated lead for safeguarding in the academy. I also met with the Chair of the Local Governing Body. Pupils gave inspectors their views on the academy when they spoke to us in lessons and around the academy site at social times. We joined the head of academy and another senior leader in short visits to lessons, where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their work in books and also carried out some observations of teaching. We spoke to school staff and also took their views into account through the 43 responses to an inspection questionnaire for academy staff. The views of parents were considered through the eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and analysis of a recent questionnaire carried out by the academy. Inspectors evaluated recent information on pupils' progress and scrutinised other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance and punctuality and their behaviour.