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Miss Caroline Phipps
Headteacher
Timbertree Academy
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Dear Miss Phipps

Short inspection of Timbertree Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

In June 2013, Timbertree converted to an academy. You and the current executive headteacher took up your posts in January 2016. You both exhibit energy, expertise, integrity and openness. Together you have secured rapid and systematic improvements.

On your arrival, you quickly determined where inconsistencies in teaching had emerged since the last inspection. In addition, you recognised where pupils' progress had slowed or stalled. You lost no time in identifying priorities for improvement and communicating how and why the school needed to move forward. Your initial judgements were confirmed by a number of external reviews including teaching and learning, governance, additional funding and safeguarding. Teaching and learning in the early years was an identified area for improvement in the last inspection.

Pupils see the value in what they are learning. They are evidently excited and enthusiastic about their achievements. They understand what is expected of them and how to check their own work, and they are eager to improve. Pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they have problems. They have high expectations of each other's behaviour and manners. Pupils take pride in their appearance and look extremely smart in their school uniforms.

Leaders have adopted a range of methods to keep parents informed: termly parents' meeting, annual reports, induction meetings for new parents and events to seek parents' views. Those parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities have regular meetings with staff and appropriate agencies to ensure their children receive the support they need. The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. Nevertheless, leaders are in the process of updating the website and making it more informative and accessible for parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

All checks on staff, agency staff, volunteers and visitors are complete and detailed. Staff and governors receive regular training and frequent updates. Child protection and safeguarding policies are detailed and up to date.

You and the assistant headteacher meticulously check the procedures completed by staff followed by staff. Records are thorough, frequently updated and pertinent to individual cases or concerns. You established close working relationships with the local multi-agency safeguarding hub so that concerns are thoroughly investigated and the necessary support is provided.

Parents who completed the online questionnaire, and most who spoke to me at the end of the school day, agreed that leaders and staff have created a safe and caring school. The early years outdoor area is undergoing a complete refurbishment in response to recent risk assessments.

Inspection findings

- You quickly identified priorities to improve pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics so that they achieved the standards expected for their age.
- You focused sharply on the journey of pupils' learning and the sequence of steps necessary to secure their success. You provided substantial support, well-informed training and clear direction. As a result, staff are keen, and increasingly confident, to do whatever is necessary for the pupils' success and well-being. Pupils' accelerated progress is evident in their books over the last two terms.
- You ensured that substantial time was planned for identified subjects so that pupils could build effectively on skills, broaden their knowledge and deepen their understanding in a range of subjects. Staff plan the sequence of lessons so that pupils' learning experiences are purposeful and exciting. Pupils know what they must learn in any topic. They learn, practise and apply subject-related skills and are also enabled to explore and investigate their own emerging interests.
- Staff recently planned and conducted a school European Union referendum so that pupils could meaningfully explore British values, communicate and share differing opinions and express balanced views.
- The senior leadership team frequently seeks practical evidence of improvement in their analysis of pupils' rates of progress and examination of

pupils' work. You hold regular meetings with staff and pupils to seek their views and identify how pupils' needs can be better met. Staff are increasingly confident to share ideas and learn from each other.

- Pupils belonging to the student council helped to create statements regarding good learning behaviours. They observe pupils in lessons to check that the standards are met and provide developmental feedback. As a result, pupils appreciate the views of the council members, they are proud of the positive feedback and their self-esteem is rising.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception this year is in line with the national average for 2015. A below-average proportion achieved a good level of development last year. Disadvantaged children do not achieve as well as other children in their classes or nationally. Staff do not speedily identify these children's relative strengths or weaknesses and adapt learning plans accordingly. As a consequence, children do not consistently enter Year 1 with the suitable knowledge and skills to equip them for the next stage in their education.
- Staff in the early years receive substantial support and training to bring about the necessary new ways of working. Since January, children's rates of progress have increased and early writing and number skills are emerging. Nevertheless, these improvements are at an early stage of implementation and are not yet embedded. Resources, outdoor equipment and indoor furnishing are being replaced this summer to support new approaches to teaching and learning in September.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is closed by the end of Year 6 but is evident in the younger classes. The proportion of most able pupils attaining the higher levels by the end of key stage 1 was significantly above the national average last year. However, few of these pupils were disadvantaged.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2015 was slightly above the national average in all subjects. Almost all pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities achieved the expected levels, or above, for their age in all subjects. Pupils of all abilities, including the most able, made good progress from their different starting points. The progress achieved between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 was significantly above average for boys, those with learning difficulties and pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Overall, pupils achieved well in their end of key stage tests this year and everyone is rightly pleased with the outcomes. A high proportion of Year 6 pupils met or exceeded the standards expected for their age in all subjects. Almost all of the disadvantaged pupils met the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points in all subjects. The assistant headteacher responsible for the coordination of special educational needs ensures that individual pupils' needs are quickly identified. She works closely with staff, parents and external experts to ensure that pupils' support is personalised and regularly adapted.
- The leadership team and teachers have worked hard to implement new checks or assessments of pupils' progress over time. You carefully identified

the long-term goals in reading, writing and mathematics for each year group. You drew up a set of indicators so that pupils' progress could be measured and tracked each term. This information is shared and checked by staff, leaders and partner schools to agree on the accuracy of judgements or identify discrepancies.

- Leaders initiated a review of governance in January this year. After the review, governors became less reliant on information provided by leaders and introduced checks to hold leaders accountable for improvement. In addition, they began to develop an understanding of their strategic responsibilities. The United Learning Trust is in the process of reorganising the arrangements for governance and a new structure is planned for September.
- The United Learning Trust has provided good support for leaders and teachers during a time of transition.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all aspects of the early years provision are improved so that outcomes for all children are good
- the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged and further extended in all year groups
- the trusts' newly appointed governing body quickly and purposefully contribute to the school's strategic direction and knowledgeably hold leaders to account for ongoing improvement.

I am copying this letter to the United Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher and the two assistant headteachers and the head of primary school improvement for United Learning Trust. I spoke to pupils in lessons and parents in telephone calls and at the end of the school day. I observed teaching with you and the executive headteacher. I looked at pupils' work and examined information regarding pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I considered responses from Parent View and electronic surveys for pupils and staff. I looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the records of a number of external reviews conducted between January and March this year and a range of school policies.