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31 October 2016

Mr Daniel Wood  
Headteacher  
West Meadows Primary School  
West Street  
Hoyland  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Wood

### **Short inspection of West Meadows Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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 January 2011. The school converted to an academy in 2013 and belongs to the St Mary's Academy Trust.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became the new headteacher at the beginning of this school year. Staff, pupils, parents, governors and the trust have welcomed your appointment and the impact you have had so far. You have quickly formed good relationships and already know the school well. You have clearly communicated your vision and ambition for the school to become outstanding. You have recognised good practice in the school, evaluated strengths and weaknesses accurately and clearly identified your priorities for improvement. Your new mission for the school, 'aim high, succeed, be happy', has been embraced by pupils and staff. Pupils appreciate the increased opportunities for reward and recognition. Staff morale is high and leaders at all levels are keen to make a difference.

Trust leaders carried out a thorough recruitment process for the new headteacher. The acting executive principal has set clear expectations. Your mentoring is provided by an experienced headteacher in the trust. The governing body is strongly behind the school, understands its strengths and weaknesses and is well informed about your priorities.

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its high expectations for pupils' achievement. Half the pupils are disadvantaged (those eligible for free

school meals at any point during the last six years) and fewer children than average enter school at the typical level of development. Pupils have consistently reached average levels of attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2, which represents strong progress from their starting points. In 2016, at key stage 1, the proportion reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. In recent years, pupils made good progress over key stage 2. However, in 2016, Year 6 pupils did not make as much progress in reading. Historically, the school has performed well at the higher levels in mathematics but, in 2016, fewer pupils than expected reached the high standard in the new national test. Spelling was not as strong as grammar and punctuation. Leaders are acting effectively to tackle these issues.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve targets in mathematics and the quality of marking. Statements about what different ability groups should achieve in lessons are clearly written and provide pupils with a precise focus for learning in all subjects and lead to prompt assessment by teachers and pupils. Pupils respond well to teachers' marking by correcting and improving their work.

Leaders have successfully increased attendance from below average to average. Strong systems for monitoring attendance, effective work with parents and popular pupil incentives and rewards have contributed to better attendance.

The school was asked to create more opportunities to use computers. Pupils study computing and use tablets and computers for learning, but you have identified this as an area for further development. You have acted quickly to update equipment and improve internet access.

The school was also asked to increase pupils' awareness of diversity in society. The trust provides good opportunities for pupils to engage with pupils from similar and different backgrounds at other trust schools in joint sporting events and on residential visits. Pupils talked about the different religions they have learned about. You are enthusiastic about extending the arts curriculum and pupils' experience of the diversity of cultures.

The school has a positive, hard-working and friendly ethos. Pupils are smartly dressed and generally behave in a cooperative and sensible manner. Staff know pupils well and demonstrate strong commitment to their care and education. Almost all parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey would recommend the school to another parent.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Systematic records document safeguarding concerns and actions taken. Detailed notes about events and communications are stored methodically. The computer-based records provide secure access to relevant staff and ensure that information is accessible when needed. This promotes effective teamwork between staff responsible for vulnerable pupils and those who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities. It also ensures that required information is available when liaising with other agencies. Admissions, attendance and staff recruitment registers meet requirements. Pupils' topic books on personal, social and health education show that they learn about a wide range of safety issues. Pupils said that they feel safe at school and this was confirmed by recent school and Ofsted parent surveys.

## **Inspection findings**

- Senior and middle leaders take the initiative and provide effective leadership, advice and guidance in the development of English and mathematics.
- Leaders have strengthened mathematics through practical and pictorial resources and more problem-solving activities. You have identified the need to stretch the most able and are introducing new activities for them. For example, in one lesson the most able group were explaining errors in a calculation in writing. In another, the most able got on quickly because they had their own challenging task.
- Pupils make good progress in writing due to the systematic teaching of grammar and punctuation and the well-structured opportunities to develop independent writing in English and other subjects. Writing objectives in other subjects help consolidate writing skills. Good standards of presentation are consistent across subjects. However, spelling is a weaker aspect which leaders have started to remedy.
- Leaders have prioritised improvement in the teaching of reading. Teaching has focused successfully on improving pupils' skills in making inferences and deductions. However, in 2016, Year 6 pupils' skills in summarising were weaker, which led to lower outcomes in the national tests. Leaders have introduced a new approach to reading skills which has got off to a promising start and will be extended to more year groups. In addition, leaders are planning to promote reading skills in other subjects.
- Attainment in phonics has varied from year to year. In 2015, the proportion reaching the required standard in Year 1 was above average and in 2016 it was below. Leaders are developing a more coordinated approach to teaching phonics across early years and key stage 1. A trust lead practitioner is about to check its impact.
- The leader of early years has brought about improvement in baseline assessment, the learning environment, the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and teamwork among staff. She has clearly identified priorities for further improvement: the quality of outdoor provision and the implementation of a new system for recording and sharing information about children's development. In 2016, the proportion reaching a good level of development in the early years was broadly average.
- In all subjects, teachers routinely provide individual pupils with a precise printed statement of what knowledge and skills they are learning. These are matched well to pupils' ability. Teachers and pupils use them well to assess if they have met the learning objectives.
- Teachers have a consistent approach to giving pupils feedback. Pupils find teachers' feedback helpful in improving their work. Pupils who have not

understood a lesson are identified and given extra help promptly.

- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils provides additional teaching assistants, who make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and the life of the school, for example through music.
- In 2015, disadvantaged Year 6 pupils made better progress than others nationally in reading and writing. In mathematics, their progress was similar to others nationally.
- Improved attendance and reduced persistent absence have been achieved by strong teamwork, close monitoring and prompt action. Parents are chased up when pupils do not attend but are also offered support when there are difficulties. Pupils appreciate the rewards for good attendance, chosen by pupils on the school council.
- Trust leaders provide regular and relevant professional development to meet the identified needs of senior and subject leaders and teaching staff. Observing other ways of working in trust schools and beyond has been influential in developing teaching and learning. The acting executive principal keeps a close eye on school improvement through regular audits and an annual review.
- Governors are well organised and diligent in their monitoring of safeguarding and the performance of the school. The succession to the chair of the governing body was well managed. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear understanding of your priorities.
- Trust leaders recognise the need to update the website to fully comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governance and exclusion.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the teaching of phonics and reading result in stronger progress and better spelling
- the most able make more progress, especially in mathematics
- the curriculum is enriched by developing the arts and computing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I pursued the following lines of enquiry:

- Has achievement in English and mathematics been sustained?
- Does teaching provide appropriate challenge and have precise targets, especially in mathematics, and does marking help pupils to improve?
- Has attendance improved?
- Do pupils have good opportunities to learn about diversity and use computers in their learning?
- Are leaders bringing about improvement and is safeguarding effective?

I met with you, senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, five members of the governing body and two representatives of St Mary's Academy Trust. I jointly observed teaching with you, and we discussed the learning and pupils' work. I heard pupils read and examined pupils' writing and topic books.

The school website was checked and a range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, the attendance and admissions register and safeguarding records. I took account of 30 responses from parents and 16 responses from teaching and support staff to the Ofsted online questionnaires.