

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Will Hermon  
Executive Headteacher  
Windmill Hill Academy  
Windmill Hill  
Launceston  
Cornwall  
PL15 9AE

Dear Mr Hermon

### **Short inspection of Windmill Hill Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 February 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

In your role as executive headteacher of the school and chief executive officer of An Daras multi-academy trust, you have a very clear insight into the strengths of the school and the areas of its work that require further development. You have a good understanding of the school's position within the trust and how it can draw on support from other schools in it if necessary. As a consequence of this clarity, the school's self-evaluation processes and strategic development planning are of high quality and place the school on a strong footing to improve further. You, the trust and school leaders, including governors, have already demonstrated the capacity to bring about swift improvement in the quality of education, such as in the early years foundation stage, where outcomes for children have risen sharply. In January 2017, a new executive headteacher will take over at Windmill Hill Academy as it forms part of a 'pod' of three schools within the expanding trust.

The drive for continual improvement is characterised by strong teamwork at all leadership levels. You, the head of school, other leaders, governors and officers of the trust work very effectively together. In particular, the local governing advisory body provides a good level of strategic oversight. Its members are not afraid to provide the levels of challenge that good leadership needs and desires. In recent months, new governors have been recruited and new monitoring systems have been initiated. This has brought increased rigour to the governing body's strategic oversight of the school's work.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Keeping pupils safe and secure is at the heart of the safeguarding culture in your school. There is a strong sense that all adults and children care for each other extremely well, and this promotes a culture of vigilance. In particular, there are strong systems in place for staff to alert senior leaders swiftly of any concerns that they may have that a child is not thriving. This helps to promote the principle of 'early help' enshrined in the latest guidance from the Secretary of State, 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016. All staff have read part one of this document and all other child protection and 'Prevent' duty training is up to date. The single central record of the checks that the school makes on the backgrounds of staff and their suitability to work with children is well maintained. There are, however, shortcomings in the school's admissions register; school leaders are aware of this and are working with the multi-academy trust's safeguarding officer to rectify this situation.

## **Inspection findings**

- School leaders have recently focused on improving the quality of education provided in the early years foundation stage and their efforts have been rewarded. Outcomes for children in the early years have improved rapidly. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception is now higher than the national average, having been much lower previously. In particular, the outcomes for disadvantaged children in the early years have improved dramatically. The proportion who achieve a good level of development is now higher than the national figure.
- Improved outcomes for children in the early years have been achieved by improvements in the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers and teaching assistants build successfully upon children's natural curiosity to devise activities which promote development across all the early learning goals. Teaching is also very effectively supported by the multi-academy trust's early years expert.
- This success in improving the quality of education provided in the early years illustrates that school leaders, supported by the multi-academy trust, have the capacity to identify areas of potential weakness and turn them into strengths through concerted and effective action.
- Across the school as a whole, disadvantaged pupils make broadly good progress, although there are some inconsistencies between the key stages that need to be addressed. In the key stage 2 national curriculum assessments for 2016, disadvantaged pupils made progress that was in line with other pupils nationally. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show this also to be the case for disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 2.
- In the key stage 1 assessments for 2016, however, there were some inconsistencies in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. While a lower proportion than the national figure reached the expected standard in reading and writing, a higher proportion achieved greater depth. In mathematics the picture was reversed, with a higher proportion reaching the expected standard but none achieving a greater depth. This indicates that teaching is meeting the needs of some disadvantaged pupils well but not others. School leaders are well aware that such inconsistencies need to be ironed out and further improving the

performance of disadvantaged pupils is a key aspect of the school's development plan. Leaders have already been successful in swiftly improving outcomes for disadvantaged children in the early years.

- The provision for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, was a key focus of this inspection, as historic assessment information indicated a tendency for them to do better at key stage 2 in mathematics than in reading and writing. Extensive scrutiny of the work of the most able pupils currently in the school across a range of subjects shows that they are making broadly good progress from their high starting points.
- With specific reference to writing, the most able pupils in key stage 2, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, demonstrate that they are developing the knowledge, understanding and skills to write at greater depth within the expected standard. Many can produce work characterised by sophisticated sentence structure, wide vocabulary, effective paragraphing and the ability to sustain tone and effect over extended periods of writing. Nonetheless, teaching does not consistently provide the most able pupils with the opportunity to develop these attributes regularly across the curriculum. School leaders recognise this issue and addressing it is a key element in their strategic planning.
- Some of the results of the national curriculum assessments in 2016 indicated a disparity in the outcomes for girls and boys, with boys showing a tendency to do better than girls. No evidence from observations in lessons or scrutiny of work, however, indicates that this is a concern in relation to current pupils. In addition, the school's internal tracking system shows no significant differences between girls' and boys' progress across the school as a whole.
- The school encourages pupils to read effectively. Records of pupils' reading are well maintained and encourage a dialogue between home and school in support of encouraging pupils' love of reading. Pupils read well and, taking into account their starting points, make good progress in their reading. They understand how to use various techniques, including phonics, to help them deal with unfamiliar or difficult words.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is more consistent across the whole school.
- teaching for the most able pupils enables them to develop their knowledge and understanding to a high level, especially in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held a number of meetings with you, the head of school and officers of An Daras multi-academy trust. I also had a meeting with chair of the local governing advisory board. Jointly with senior leaders, I undertook observations in lessons and scrutinised work in pupils' books. During these activities I took the opportunity to talk to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. I also listened to a number of pupils reading aloud. I examined documents provided by the school: these included the school's own self-evaluation and the school development plan. I took into account the 12 responses to the Ofsted online survey of parental opinion, Parent View, and the 20 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry:

- How quickly do disadvantaged pupils make progress?
- How well do the most able pupils make progress, especially in reading and writing at key stage 2?
- How well do pupils in key stage 2 develop depth in their writing?
- How successfully are leaders addressing any differences in the progress and attainment of boys and girls across the key stages?
- How effective is provision in the early years foundation stage?