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Mrs Gerry Healy  
Headteacher  
Park Hall Junior Academy  
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Dear Mrs Healy

### **Short inspection of Park Hall Junior Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 Park Hall Junior Academy was judged to be good in March 2012.

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

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

You, staff and governors have created an environment in which every child feels valued. Parents are very supportive, with 100% of parents who took part in the online survey recommending the school as they believe their children are happy and taught well. You and other leaders share the same high level of commitment and drive required in order to bring about continued improvement and this is reflected in the confidence that staff and parents have in the leadership.

The children come first and are central to the school's work. You have created an inclusive, culturally diverse community where innovation is welcomed and every small step to success is celebrated. The passion that is shared by you and all other stakeholders is clear. This rubs off on the children who in turn show a great love for learning, matching the school's mission statement of 'Learn to Live, Live to Learn', which is displayed in the corridors and supported by photographs of pupils at work.

Since the last inspection you have been successful in addressing all of the areas for improvement identified at that time. You have introduced a phonics scheme in Year 3, which has enabled pupils struggling with phonics to quickly rectify their limitations.

You and your staff have been very effective in improving opportunities for extended

writing across the curriculum. This is very apparent in books and around the school, exemplified by the language that the pupils are using; for example, 'I tried to have a go at personification'; 'I changed the grammatical structure of my sentences to create the effect I want.' You continue to look at ways in which you can further enhance the quality of the writing that pupils produce by providing the most able with more sophisticated literature and by focusing on grammar in all year groups. However, there is more work to be done to improve outcomes in reading and writing for the most able pupils and to ensure that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve.

Pupils take great pride in their work and the quality of their presentation; 'I practise my cursive script but it's not as neat as this handwriting so I decided that's more important to me,' stated one pupil. As a result of your determination and drive to improve the quality of presentation, you have instilled high expectations across all year groups.

You, staff and other stakeholders have been actively involved in creating a school development plan that is accurate, purposeful and enables all leaders, staff and governors to measure the impact of the school's work. This has led to clearer and succinct actions that are shared by all staff. You review this plan regularly and are able to fine tune further actions. You ensure that governors are well informed and knowledgeable about what actions the school needs to take and the impact that they have had. You and other leaders use assessment information to inform the decision-making process and accurately introduce strategies to further enhance the learning of all pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All procedures and policies are in place to ensure that safeguarding is a strength across the school. You have provided all staff with the appropriate training and have developed a shared understanding that the safeguarding of pupils is everyone's responsibility. By building relationships with outside agencies, you have further strengthened safeguarding and provided deeper layers of support to ensure that all pupils are safe.

Your involvement of parents has given them confidence and a sense of security for the well-being of their children. This is shown by your determination to account for all children when absent, which parents appreciate as part of your responsibility, and goes towards their sense of trust and faith in you.

### **Inspection findings**

- The school has rigorous procedures in place to respond to and establish the reasons for any pupil's absence. Parents are aware of the need to attend regularly and the adverse effect that absence has on the progress and attainment of their children. Leaders monitor attendance regularly and are well aware of the factors that influence why a particular pupil or pupils may have a higher absence level than others. Governors regularly speak with parents both before and after

school and are clear about the importance of attendance. Leaders have been successful in their involvement of outside agencies as part of their on-going strategy to reduce absence levels. However, the current absence levels are high for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with an education, health and care plan and those with a statement of special educational needs.

- The progress and attainment of most-able pupils in writing is below the national average. A number of whole-school strategies have been implemented during the current academic year to raise the attainment of most-able pupils overall. These need to be maintained and evaluated in the light of outcomes for pupils to make sure that they are having the required effect.
- Governors are well informed about key groups of pupils within the school and, in turn, both support and rigorously hold leaders to account. This is assisted by the regular feedback that they receive from middle leaders.
- Teachers provide accurate and challenging feedback that moves pupils' learning forward. This is consistently applied across the school in all subjects and in all year groups. Pupils respond well to this feedback and appreciate its importance in developing their learning. All pupils are able to talk from a well-informed position about their next steps and what they need to focus on in order to improve.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning. During lessons, they work hard and support one another when working collaboratively. Their manners are impeccable, showing courtesy at all times and moving sensibly around the school. Pupils are happy and say that behaviour is good. This is reflected in the behaviour records. When incidents of unacceptable behaviour occur, they are dealt with swiftly and the necessary action is taken to eliminate reoccurrence.
- Teaching is good across the school. Imaginative tasks engage the pupils' interest and adults facilitate pupils' successful learning without hindering their research, endeavour or investigation. Tasks are well timed to ensure that pupils get the most from each one and teachers plan well, adapting plans on a daily basis to address pupils' needs and gaps in understanding. Pupils are challenged effectively and they accurately judge their own work and what needs to be improved against given expectations. Pupils chat quietly and purposefully about work, and share ideas and what they have learned.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported by timely intervention, which has a positive impact on their progress. This is further enhanced by the pro-active stance that leaders have adopted in introducing additional school activities and teaching time in the form of 'Saturday School' to boost progress and attainment. Staff are generous with their personal time and demonstrate a real commitment to supporting pupils. Leaders have demonstrated their ability to be innovative in their drive to address the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and also across the curriculum. However, improvements in the rate of progress that disadvantaged pupils make are inconsistent across year groups. In some year groups, they are not challenged enough to attain more highly.
- Leaders share a single-minded approach to ensuring that a higher proportion of

middle-ability pupils achieve greater depth of understanding in writing. The most recently published national data shows that no pupils of middle ability made sufficient progress in order to attain greater depth in writing. Leaders have been rigorous in their efforts to identify barriers to progress. Consequently, strategies that have been introduced in the last term are having a positive impact on rates of progress in writing for these pupils. As part of these strategies pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve the quality and content of their writing in all subjects.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance levels for all groups of pupils are at least in line with national averages
- the rate of progress of the most able pupils speeds up in reading and writing so that more pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding
- the level of challenge for disadvantaged pupils is increased so that high levels of progress are consistent across all year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Ellis  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and your senior leaders and with other members of staff. You and I conducted a learning walk, which involved brief visits to classrooms to observe the quality of teaching and learning. During this time, I also took the opportunity to look at pupils' books with you and I also spoke with a number of pupils about their learning and their experiences of being a pupil at your school. I also looked at displays around the school and saw further examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised the single central record for compliance with you and the person responsible in school for maintaining this record. I also met with governors and scrutinised the school's current data and nationally published data with key leaders for mathematics and English. I met with the designated safeguarding lead and also looked at behaviour logs, checked all of the national requirements regarding safeguarding and reviewed attendance data.