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Mrs Judith Stott
Principal
Old Trafford Community Academy
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Dear Mrs Stott

Short inspection of Old Trafford Community Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, which took place before it became an academy in April 2014. At that point, you set about establishing what is now a coherent senior leadership team, wholly focused on helping pupils to learn as well as they can. Teamwork throughout the school is strong and staff work together effectively to secure further improvement for the pupils.

You responded well to what you were asked to do at the previous inspection. Expectations of staff and pupils are higher and the checks made on teaching and learning are rigorous. You hold staff to account well and you share the information with governors, who also check for themselves that what they are being told really is happening. You have worked with staff to develop learning experiences that are rich, interesting and relevant to pupils. Pupils see the links between subjects and understand the purpose to their learning activities. The curriculum is planned well in all subjects.

A clear feature of your school is the friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the obvious happiness of the pupils as they learn and play. They thoroughly enjoy learning and are hungry to learn more. Well-established routines and systems ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school and a culture of mutual respect. This is evident in everything that staff, pupils and parents do and say. When asked what the best thing about the school is, pupils swiftly agreed that it is 'the way everyone works together to make it better'. They remind each other quickly to show respect when someone is not listening as well as they could or not taking turns properly. Behaviour is good and relationships are excellent throughout the school.

The parents I spoke to were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly praise the individual care given to pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They spoke about how approachable you and the staff are, and how you all help the many different cultures in the school to get along together. Parents very much appreciate the way you all reach out to them and are prepared to help them when times are tough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

The culture of safeguarding is very strong. Staff are very well informed about the latest safeguarding guidance and all training is up to date, including for child protection and first aid. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are tenacious in pursuing the most effective options for ensuring that pupils' emotional and mental health needs are met and their physical well-being promoted. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and make the right choices. They readily refer to safety on trips, fire safety and safety when using the internet, mobile phones and social media sites. They speak openly and freely about the many aspects of child protection and safeguarding, and how to access help if they have any concerns. As some pupils spoke of seeking help from an adult, others reminded them that it had to be a 'sensible' adult, someone they could trust, like one of the adults in school. Pupils put tolerance and respect high on their agenda. The work they did following recent alleged terrorist attacks pays testament to their understanding of how to avoid extremism and radicalisation, and the importance of not being swayed by other people's opinions when they know them to be wrong. Parents are very aware of the school's procedures regarding safeguarding. They appreciate the workshops set up for them at which sensitive issues are explored that help them to protect themselves and their children better.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remains good, I identified some key lines of enquiry, which I agreed with you at the start of the inspection. The first was to look at what you are doing to raise standards in writing, especially boys' writing.
- You have introduced more 'boy-friendly' topics, taking care not to put girls off by doing so. There are now more challenging texts for all pupils. I noted from the pupils' books that boys write better when writing is linked to topic work, but they generally write less than girls, and less well, when it is not.
- Spelling remains an issue throughout the school. It is improving more rapidly in key stage 1 than in key stage 2. This is as a result of the good teaching of phonics. In key stage 2, while pupils learn to spell the words specified for their age group, they do not subsequently use what they learn when they write.
- My second line of enquiry was whether last year's improvements in phonics in Year 1 are being sustained, and whether reading and writing are better than in the past in the Reception classes. I found both to be the case.
- Phonics is taught well. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their phonics skills well when reading and writing. Pupils' comprehension skills are not as well developed as their ability to read the written word.
- Children are making good progress in the early years. There is a strong focus on language development alongside personal development. Good progress is evident in Reception children's English and mathematics books.
- Work recorded in the floor books, while showing that all areas of learning are covered, is not always dated and annotated. This limits its usefulness as a tool for demonstrating progress in different areas.
- My third line of enquiry was about how effectively you are meeting your objective of improving provision and progress for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding and who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I found you are meeting the objective well.
- The differences and the crossover between special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantage are understood and measured well. Learning is tailored to the needs of the pupils and staff give parents much good support to help them help their children. Thinking throughout the school about both of these groups has moved from 'Pupils can't do' to 'How can we help them to do?' This shift has raised expectations and enabled the pupils to make better progress. Short, sharp interventions are paying off, aiding progress and enabling pupils to participate fully in all learning.
- My fourth line of enquiry was around safeguarding and attendance. I have covered safeguarding earlier in this letter. I found that procedures to encourage good attendance and punctuality are robust and applied systematically throughout the school. Attendance has improved, although it is still in line with the national average.

- It is clear you have done everything possible to impress on parents the importance of good attendance. Despite your best efforts, there are still a small number of pupils whose attendance remains low. Rightly, you have sought external support to work with families to help them to improve their children's attendance.
- I noted that attendance in Nursery is not as good as it might be. While links with parents are good, there is scope for further work to establish the good habits in attendance and punctuality needed for later.
- My final line of enquiry was about the curriculum. I found that all subjects of the curriculum are taught well, including religious education. Staff find out what pupils know at the start of a topic and use it well to plan work that takes their learning further.
- The skills in each subject are given due attention. Assessments at the end of a topic check that pupils have acquired new skills, knowledge and understanding in line with the objectives in the national curriculum.
- Exciting activities, such as making a bird's nest before exploring habitats, help to link learning across subjects for pupils. Answering what you call 'big questions' gives pupils opportunities to think more deeply and widely for themselves – for example, in history, where they learn to separate fact from opinion.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- standards are raised in writing, especially for boys, by:
 - encouraging boys to write at greater length, especially when writing is not related to topic work
 - building with greater urgency on the work being done to improve spelling in key stage 2, and ensuring that spelling is given due attention in all writing.
- staff work even more closely with Nursery parents to establish the good patterns of attendance needed for the future so that children can learn well.

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

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, spoke to various staff throughout the day and met with the senior leadership team after school. We talked about improvements since the previous inspection and how you had moved forward since becoming an academy. I considered your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness and I examined all safeguarding records, including those relating to attendance. I spoke with the chief executive officer from the trust and with the chair of the governing body. Together, you and I visited the early years. We sampled phonics sessions in key stage 1 and English sessions in key stages 1 and 2. We also looked at a range of books together. I held a formal discussion with eight pupils and talked to many more informally. I also listened to pupils read. There were few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but I met with around 20 parents at the start of the school day, visited a parents' group that was taking place in the afternoon and took account of what parents said in your own most recent questionnaire. I also took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.