

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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12 February 2018

Mrs Patricia Briggs  
Executive Principal  
Severn View Academy  
Bisley Old Road  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 1NL

Dear Mrs Briggs

### **Short inspection of Severn View Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 2018, 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Severn View Academy is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils run in to school in the morning with enthusiasm, and parents and carers welcome the opportunity to talk to your staff about their child as they drop them off. The pupils told me how much they like coming to school.

There has been significant change since the previous inspection. The previous principal left at the end of last term and subsequently Academies Enterprise Trust ('the trust') appointed you as executive principal overseeing both Severn View and Brockworth Primary Academy in Gloucester since the start of this term. Almost all teachers at Severn View have taken up their post since the previous inspection and the class structure has been reorganised. Parents reported to me that they feel these changes have been managed well and their children continue to enjoy school.

You rightly recognise that progress is too variable across the classes and have already implemented a programme of support for teaching staff. It is very early days and so the impact this is having on pupils' learning is limited. You, and the trust, are committed to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You recognise that the school's website is not easy for parents to use and some information that is required is missing or difficult to find.

At the previous inspection, the school's leaders were asked to improve pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work. This has been tackled successfully and most pupils now take care in setting out their work and ensure that their handwriting is legible. In November 2014, inspectors also tasked school leaders with refining improvement plans. This was done. However, the actions that were detailed did not match closely enough to pupils' academic needs. As a result, progress in the early years and key stage 1 did not improve as was hoped. Since taking up post earlier this term, you have identified the priority areas for improvement. Supported by trust leaders, you are making significant changes to ensure that pupils make better progress across the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff know the pupils and their families very well. They recognise the signs and triggers when children are at risk of harm and take swift action to ensure that pupils stay safe and are nurtured. Many families benefit from the work of a number of school staff who support them. The outdoor learning initiative has been particularly effective in helping a number of pupils develop the social skills they need to be successful. As a result of the support that school staff provide, pupils' behaviour has improved and the number of pupils who are excluded has fallen.

All staff are trained in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. Governors and leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding are suitably trained. They make referrals, including those to early help, in a timely fashion and arrange or provide the support for families who need it. Despite this good work, pupils' attendance at school is low and the number of pupils who are regularly absent is increasing.

You and officers of the trust recognised that there were inconsistencies in the way that checks carried out on staff members were recorded. Following an audit earlier this term, you have arranged for this to be rectified. You recognise that at the time of this inspection record-keeping of staff records is not tight enough.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of this inspection, we agreed the specific areas of the school's work that would form the focus. The first area we explored was the design of the early years curriculum and its implementation. The children in Reception enjoy coming to school and demonstrate good attitudes towards their learning. They interact well with one another. Children and staff have formed strong relationships. Staff work closely with families. Staff know children well and are sensitive to children's needs. As a result, children willingly engage in the wide range of activities that are planned for them and are keen to do well.
- However, learning in the Reception class is not planned carefully enough to take account of pupils' needs or prior learning. Assessments are not routinely used to inform children's next steps. Consequently, progress is too slow, particularly in reading, writing and control when handling materials.

- The second area we reviewed was pupils' development of their phonics knowledge and skills. Pupils in Reception and Years 1, 2 and 3 are not fully confident in their ability to use their phonics knowledge to decode words and identify and blend sounds. Pupils lack confidence in their own ability and are not yet making the progress they should. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are more confident in using phonics when they meet new words. We agreed that there are too few opportunities for pupils to read aloud. Consequently, teachers' assessments of pupils' skills are not thorough. Planning of future learning does not lead to the improvements that are needed.
- Middle leaders' recent work has identified gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge and understanding. Planning is under way to ensure that pupils catch up. You have also reviewed the school's approach to teaching phonics and are researching different approaches to better meet the needs of the pupils at Severn View. We also noted that many members of the teaching staff have not had the high-quality training they need to be able to teach phonics well. This is core to your improvement strategy.
- My third line of enquiry focused on pupils' reading skills in Years 1, 2 and 3 as well as those of the most able pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. The most able pupils are developing skills to help them understand the texts they are reading. In Years 5 and 6, the reading strategy is effective. It provides a helpful stimulus for pupils to structure their thinking about a text. As a result, they are able to 'read between the lines' and make deductions with confidence.
- Very few pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read with intonation or take account of the author's punctuation when they are reading. Many do not recognise words they have read earlier in the text. Often, and in all year groups, pupils do not have the contextual understanding of the time period or location their text is set in. This hinders their understanding of the storyline. Consequently, for most pupils, progress in reading is slow.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the early years curriculum is designed well and learning planned to meet children's needs and ensure that they make good progress
- the quality of teaching and assessment of phonics improves
- pupils are aware of the context of the texts they are reading so that they have a better understanding
- procedures for keeping records of pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers are tightened
- pupils attend school more regularly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you joined me in observing learning. We looked at the work of a number of pupils and heard many read. I spoke with pupils throughout the day. I met with a number of parents at the start of the day. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the lead teacher for English and the chair of the board of trustees who is the trust's representative.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own analysis of strengths and weaknesses, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of two parents who responded to Parent View and the two members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.