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Emma Thorne
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Dear Mrs Thorne

Short inspection of St Ann's Well Academy

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have communicated a clear vision for school improvement. You have high expectations of staff and are aspirational for pupils' success. You have created a culture where all feel valued and are keen to succeed. Staff understand the school's priorities and the means by which to realise your aims. The quality of leadership and management, in all areas of the school, is a strength.

Trust leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to provide valuable support to all aspects of the school's work. Governance is strong and leaders are effectively held to account.

Pupils are happy and safe. They recognise that their teachers want them to do well and work hard. They are keen to meet teachers' high expectations and are aspirant. They enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They recognise that their children make good progress and appreciate the support they receive.

Since the last inspection, you have ensured that teachers challenge pupils more effectively. You have introduced a framework to support teachers' use of questioning. In the lessons we observed, teachers used questioning skilfully, to probe and deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers plan activities which meet pupils' different needs and abilities. The most able pupils are sufficiently

challenged, and the least able are effectively supported. This means that all pupils make very good progress in all subjects.

You have amended the curriculum to ensure that pupils are provided with more opportunities for writing. There are now frequent opportunities for pupils to write for extended periods, practising their skills in writing across a variety of genres. For example, Year 2 pupils write information texts as part of their 'dragonology' topic. Pupils recognise that they practise the writing skills they learn in their English lessons, when they come to write in their topic-based lessons. They are able to apply their knowledge and understanding; thus, the quality of pupils' writing has improved.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers routinely use information about what pupils can already do to provide challenging activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in all key stages. This is beginning to support them to access the higher standards.

The last inspection identified the need to provide more opportunities for children in the early years to practise their reading and writing skills when learning outdoors. There has been a significant refurbishment throughout the early years area, including outdoors. Leaders have maximised opportunities both inside and in the outdoor area to promote reading and writing. For example, children begin developing their reading and writing as soon as they enter the building in the morning by excitedly finding their personal cards and carefully writing words that have been selected for their ability. The outdoor area provides several activities to promote reading and to practise writing. For example, the 'writing shed' is painted in blackboard paint and a bucket of chalk-sticks invites children to make marks and develop their writing. Leaders are keen to develop the outdoor area further, now that refurbishments inside are complete.

The leadership team undertakes extensive evaluation activities and uses the information that this provides to give bespoke training for staff. You have ensured that best practice is shared throughout the school. There is very much a culture of collaborative development. For example, teachers observe one another's practice to learn from each other. Staff are keen to develop further and appreciate the extensive professional development they have received from leaders in the school and from the trust.

Middle leaders are beginning to take greater responsibility for improving the quality of provision in the subjects for which they are responsible. For example, they have conducted an audit of staff skills and knowledge, and adapted resources and planning materials to support staff to teach subjects in which they are less confident. This has improved the quality of teaching across the curriculum.

You have correctly identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The

improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are beginning to reap benefits, and more pupils are working towards these standards. Nevertheless, you are aware that this remains a priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff recognise and embrace their responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. They have received up-to-date training. The designated safeguarding lead involves external agencies as appropriate and is tenacious in following up referrals. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders' work is further strengthened by the trust, which conducts additional monitoring activities to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection findings

- Considerable work has been undertaken to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. All staff have contributed to the creation of a culture where reading is promoted. Displays present pupils' favourite books, and reading areas are widespread. Pupils read widely and regularly, and parents are encouraged to support their child's learning through reading together. For example, children in the early years take home the 'bear with a suitcase', which provides a range of reading experiences to share with their parents. Older pupils record their reading activity and reflect on their reading experiences. This also provides a means by which teachers can monitor their reading progress.
- Leaders have introduced a new system that ensures that pupils read appropriately challenging books, and it also supports teachers' assessments. Leaders have also ensured that teachers' assessment of pupils' progress in reading is more accurate than in the past. This means that they are able to identify gaps in pupils' learning and intervene quickly to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.
- The teaching of phonics is good throughout the school. The quality of provision in the early years setting has improved considerably, and children make very good progress. They are thus well prepared to start key stage 1. Pupils continue to make good progress through strong phonics teaching in Year 1. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 exceeded the national average.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading in Year 2 and in key stage 2. The 'big read' provides daily, extended periods to develop reading skills. Pupils experience a range of genres, which develop and extend their vocabulary. Texts are challenging and interest and motivate pupils.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to read a variety of genres through different media. For example, Year 4 pupils undertake research activities, using the internet, as part of their 'rainforest' topic.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making faster progress in reading than has

been seen in the past. Leaders' tracking information indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 will exceed the national average. This is corroborated by work in pupils' books.

- Pupils' attendance is closely monitored. The attendance and welfare officer follows up absences swiftly. For example, she makes contact with parents and conducts home visits to help parents identify barriers to regular attendance and to develop strategies to overcome these. Parents, who made their views known, appreciate the support they receive. Overall attendance has improved. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is above the national average. This remains a priority for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics are embedded
- plans to further develop the effectiveness of the outdoor area in the early years setting are realised
- the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is reduced.

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 Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and staff. The inspector also met with two representatives of the L.E.A.D Academies Trust.
- The inspector visited classes in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally in their lessons.
- Seven free-text comments on Parent View were considered. The inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the day.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and

safety. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, and the lead inspector looked at published information on the school's website.

- The inspector looked at a sample of pupils' books with senior leaders.