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Mr Lee Hessey
Principal
The Sir Donald Bailey Academy
Bailey Road
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Dear Mr Hessey

Short inspection of The Sir Donald Bailey Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your drive and ambition, along with those of the trustees, ensure that pupils are well prepared for secondary school. You have placed an emphasis on pupils being confident and self-assured. You and your team have worked hard to improve the speaking skills of pupils across the school. In each classroom that I visited, I was greeted by two class ambassadors. These pupils shook my hand, told me their names and what they were learning in their lesson. They were consistently courteous and polite, and were obviously proud of their roles.

Children in the early years were keen to talk and share with me what they were doing. One child told me that he was called Merry Christmas and that he had stolen Christmas. He was then able to describe how children would feel if they did not have presents.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good overall gains from their starting points. Their overall achievement is good. However, you are aware that children, and particularly the disadvantaged, typically attain less well than do others nationally at the end of the Reception Year. In particular, not all of the pupil premium funding is currently proving sufficiently effective in ensuring that high proportions of these children attain a good level of development. You are also putting in place effective action to raise attainment further for all pupils at key stage 1, because this remains lower than is found nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated lead member of staff for safeguarding takes effective action where there is concern about the safety of a pupil. She is tenacious in her approach to safeguarding. She has a sound knowledge of procedures around referrals. She confidently challenges outside agencies and other professionals if she feels that the outcome of a decision will not support the well-being of a pupil. All staff, along with the trustees, are fully trained in safeguarding procedures. Early help is used in school to help pupils and families who may need extra support. Where early help is not available to families, the safeguarding lead ensures that the school offers and delivers that support to those families effectively.

The safeguarding lead keeps detailed records of all pupils where there is a concern about the welfare of a pupil. During my visit, the case studies I saw highlighted where the school's interventions have been successful in supporting pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

There is a strong emphasis on regular attendance, and levels are in line with the national average. An attendance officer helps leaders ensure that pupils are not absent without good reason. Pupils in all year groups told me that they feel safe in school, and that teachers deal with any concerns or worries that they have. Pupils also learn how to keep safe, including, for example, while using the internet.

Inspection findings

- The trustees have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They visit the school regularly, talk to pupils and look at the work that pupils are doing. Trustees understand the need to expose pupils to a range of experiences and ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Children join early years with skills that are below those typically found in pupils of the same age. The progress that children are making from their starting points is rising. Leaders are keen to ensure that further improvements take place so that as many children as possible are ready to begin Year 1. Leaders agree that there is not yet sufficient consistency across the different environments in the early years to ensure that children make rapid progress. Staff sometimes do not use every opportunity for children to make brisk gains across all areas of learning.
- Because of pupils' lower starting skills, the proportion of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics screening check remains below the national average. However, phonics is taught increasingly well in the early years and in key stage 1. As a result, the proportion of pupils who achieve this measure is rising. Pupils' pronunciation of sounds is clear and teachers expect them to repeat the sounds accurately.
- Pupils' progress is not yet rapid in key stage 1. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been in the lowest 10% of schools for the past two

years. However, leaders are improving the quality of teaching. For example, the subject leader for English has put into place strategies to raise standards across the school. There is now a clear monitoring cycle, the results of which form the basis of targets which leaders expect teachers to meet. The leader for English has a clear focus on how to ensure greater progress and higher attainment in reading.

- As a result of good teaching, pupils make significantly good progress in key stage 2. For example, in 2017, the progress pupils made was above average in reading, and in both writing and mathematics it was in the top 10% of all schools nationally. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion who achieved the expected standard was above the national average for both writing and mathematics.
- This good achievement is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. For example, for the past three years, pupils in the Year 6 cohort have made significantly greater progress than the national average in both writing and mathematics. Their progress in reading has been at least as good as that of other pupils nationally. However, in the early years, the impact of the pupil premium funding has not been as effective in raising children's attainment.
- During the inspection, I saw pupils who were keen to learn and who are making good progress. Leaders are aware that they need to do more to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all year groups.
- The teaching assistants I observed during my visit were deployed well and supported the pupils effectively. They used a range of questioning that then extended the pupils' learning.
- Pupils have individual targets in mathematics and English. The pupils could tell me what they had to do to improve their work and make progress.
- Children in the early years were keen to talk to me about school, as well as the things they were learning. For example, they showed me enthusiastically how they can count accurately. Others were learning independently, including using information and communication technology (ICT) to support their recognition of numbers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment rises at the end of key stage 1 for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics
- greater proportions of children, and particularly disadvantaged children, attain a good level of development at the end of the early years, so that they are well prepared to begin Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Crofts
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, pupils, parents and carers, the leadership team, and four trustees. You and I jointly observed teaching and learning in most classes and we looked at pupils' books. I read documents relating to school leadership, including minutes from meetings of the trustees, analyses of assessment data and the school's targets. I reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and the record of recruitment checks. I considered the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 15 pupil responses to the questionnaire for pupils and the 21 responses to the questionnaire for staff.