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Ian Dewes
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dewes

Short inspection of Leamington Hastings Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment as executive headteacher in September 2016, you have set high expectations for children and staff. You have restructured the school's leadership and put in place rigorous systems to support pupils' progress.

Leamington Hastings Church of England Academy is a very small school. In 2015, governors took the decision for the school to join the diocese of Coventry multi-academy trust, as they felt the school needed to be part of a larger structure to sustain a good quality of education. At that time, the school also experienced staffing issues. These issues, combined with a lack of effective systems to monitor pupil's progress, led to a rapid decline in outcomes when new national standards and assessments were introduced. Because you are an experienced headteacher and a national leader of education, the trust appointed you as executive headteacher to tackle the issues they identified and improve outcomes. You acted swiftly to do so. You appointed a highly effective head of school from your outstanding infant school. You updated the curriculum, put in place rigorous assessment systems and provided extensive training to staff to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, there is a strong sense of purpose in the school, pupils are taught well and outcomes are improving.

Children in the early years and pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy the care and attention of the staff. There is a strong sense of community, and children get on well with adults and with each other. The school provides a safe and pleasant environment that is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Typically, parents commented on the community spirit in the school and the fact that 'everyone is friends across the year groups'. Recent changes and their 'huge impact on the well-being and achievement of the children' were also praised by parents who have been involved with the school over time. The local community actively supports the school, and members of the community volunteer to take part in school's activities on a regular basis.

Although the school is very small, the curriculum is broad and offers a wide range of learning opportunities. Pupils receive a great deal of individual attention and enjoy the trips, visits and extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum. The development of children who attend the early years is well supported by well-organised indoor and outdoor areas. Because of the caring ethos of the school and its pleasant atmosphere, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and lesson time is used productively.

The changes you implemented are having a rapid and positive impact on the quality of education. However, the systems and strategies that delivered the current good standard of education are not yet fully embedded. One of your key priorities is embedding the systems to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. A continued focus on the professional development of staff is also required to ensure that the current improvements in pupils' progress and attainment are sustained. Following the appointment of a new full-time head of school for next year, you are aware that you will need to support the development of this role for the school to sustain its current standards and continue to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors take their duty of care very seriously and ensure that the safety and well-being of children are a priority. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and the school's records are thorough and up to date. As designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that training is effective, that staff are vigilant and that pupils who need it receive appropriate support.

The school works well with parents and external agencies to support vulnerable children. The head of school, the Nursery manager and the business manager are also designated safeguarding leads to ensure that there is always someone in charge of safeguarding in the school. Pupils are taught to identify risks and how to keep safe. Governors check that all safeguarding policies and processes are effective.

Inspection findings

- Typically, children who join the early years have a level of development which is broadly typical for their age. However, over the last two years, the proportion of

children who reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was substantially below the national average. The head of school implemented effective ways of assessing children's learning needs when they join the early years. She also developed strategies with the staff to ensure that children make appropriate progress. Regular checks on children's development allow staff to plan and provide the activities that are most appropriate to support the progress of each child. As a result, the vast majority of children in the early years are developing their skills and knowledge and are making good progress from their starting points.

- Staffing issues led to a serious decline in the proportion of pupils who achieved the required standards in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 and the end of Year 2 last year. You made new appointments and provided training and support to staff to ensure that the phonics scheme that the school uses is taught in a way that allows pupils to reach at least the expected national standards. Currently, pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefit from the consistent approach to teaching phonics and are making good progress.
- You have changed the way the school supports pupils' progress by introducing rigorous checks to identify where they have gaps in their learning. Assessments across the curriculum are moderated externally by teachers from the multi-academy trust and the consortium of 17 schools you collaborate with. The results of these assessments are discussed with teachers to identify the learning priorities of each pupil in every subject. As a result, teaching is far more focused than it used to be, and pupils' attainment is much higher.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive effective personalised support. Their progress is reviewed very regularly by the head of school, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), to provide swift and effective intervention when required. Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively, and the school works well with families and external agencies to support pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared to move on to key stage 2. As you are also the executive headteacher of the junior school where most of the pupils continue their education, you make sure that the curriculum and assessment practices of the two schools are aligned. The induction process to help pupils at the end of Year 2 familiarise themselves with the junior school is effective and allows for a smooth transition.
- The school has effective systems in place to follow up attendance issues. Parents of pupils whose attendance falls below the national average are alerted to this fact by letter. In the case of persistent absences, the school works well with families and, if required, external agencies to address issues.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is sustained and improved further by:

- embedding current assessment practices so that the learning needs of each pupil continue to be identified and addressed
- continuing to focus on the professional development of staff
- Leadership is further strengthened by developing the role of the new head of school, with the support of the executive headteacher, so that the continuous improvement of the school is sustained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Coventry, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Amieli
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the head of school and SENCo as well as subject leaders. I met with the chair of governors and a community governor. I also met with representatives of the diocese of Coventry multi-academy trust. I had a discussion with a group of pupils and spoke to other pupils informally. I listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work in books. I observed teaching with you and the head of school across the early years and key stage 1. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 12 responses to the staff survey.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan and the current data on pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.