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20 June 2018

Miss Maggie Rose  
Principal  
Timberley Academy  
Bradley Road  
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Birmingham  
West Midlands  
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Dear Miss Rose

### **Short inspection of Timberley Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2018 with David Rzeknik, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together, you have ensured that Timberley Academy remains a vibrant, purposeful place to learn.

You have established an effective leadership team, which works very well together. Trustees, leaders and staff share your vision and passion for improving the learning experiences of every individual. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently, you have clearly focused on the correct priorities, and you are taking effective action to address areas of weakness. An example of this is the improvements you have made to the provision for mathematics, following a dip in results in 2017. These improvements have had a clear impact on the development of pupils' mathematical skills, which, in turn, is beginning to improve the outcomes in this subject. You rightly acknowledge, however, that there is still more to do to improve standards in mathematics.

The school is rightly proud of its fully inclusive ethos. Staff and pupils are happy and proud of their school. During the inspection, pupils were keen to share their learning experiences with us when we visited them during their lessons. They could clearly explain what they were learning about, and they demonstrated an enjoyment in learning. They are polite, well-mannered and their conduct in lessons and around the school is good.

The early years provision leads the way in ensuring that children get off to a good

start. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age. The effective support from adults through Nursery and Reception ensures that children develop the necessary learning skills so that they progress well. This has resulted in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they reach the end of Reception increasing year on year since the previous inspection, although it remains below half. You are determined to continue strengthening provision in the early years further so that this standard can be achieved by the majority of children.

Pupils continue to do well through key stage 1. You and your leadership team have taken effective steps to improve provision for phonics. As a result, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has increased each year since the previous inspection. In 2017, the school results were in line with the national figure.

Following a dip in 2017 in the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard by the end of Year 2, you took rapid, effective action. Consequently, the proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 working at the level typical for their age has increased this year. You recognise, however, that there is still more to be done to ensure that the pupils who are capable of achieving the higher standards at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics continue to do so.

In 2016, outcomes at the end of Year 6 for reading, writing and mathematics fell sharply. You and your leadership team implemented significant changes to provision in Year six, including introducing specialist teaching and a new mathematics curriculum. These actions resulted in a significant improvement in progress and attainment. In 2017, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard was just above that found nationally. Additionally, work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 this year are working at average levels. However, you recognise that not enough of your most-able pupils are achieving the higher standards, and you have implemented actions to continue to address this.

You have addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection well. You and your leadership team have maintained the overall good quality of teaching and learning despite a high number of changes in teaching staff. You monitor teaching and learning well, and the support and training that you have provided has enabled teachers at all levels to improve their skills. The pupils we spoke to in lessons had a very clear understanding of their learning, and they could explain confidently what they had to do. The new mathematics curriculum you have implemented ensures that teachers give the most able pupils work that is appropriately challenging. You have identified that you still need to do more to ensure that work in writing and reading is also sufficiently challenging for these pupils. Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills have also improved as a result of your actions.

Trustees are a strength of the school. They are involved in a range of monitoring activities, including learning walks and discussions with senior leaders and pupils.

You provide them with detailed, comprehensive information about the progress that pupils make and how the school is meeting its improvement priorities. They carry out their roles well, providing effective challenge and support.

Your systems for tracking and monitoring the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics are robust. You analyse this information well to identify areas where the pupils are not performing as highly as you expect them to. You then make appropriate improvements to the curriculum to address these issues. For example, you identified that some pupils lacked some of the higher order reading skills that they needed. In response to this, you strengthened the teaching of reading. As a result, more pupils are now attaining higher reading standards across the school.

You ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. You enhance this by making full use of your impressive grounds, which include a small farm and a forest school area. Pupils also get to experience a range of visits, including a residential stay for older children. Pupils speak highly of the opportunities that they are provided with. This rich curriculum contributes well to the personal and social development of children at all stages of their education. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is also an important part of the curriculum. You provide opportunities for pupils to learn about both physical and mental health, and to learn about their well-being. Pupils demonstrate resilience and a positive attitude towards learning from their mistakes. They also have a good understanding of how to make healthy life choices.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and the school's website contains the required information. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. Appropriate procedures are followed during the recruitment of staff. You have established a strong safeguarding culture, and staff and trustees have undertaken appropriate, up-to-date training. All staff and trustees are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping children safe, and they recognise that they have a collective responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Parents and carers agree. The school's designated safeguarding leads and deputy safeguarding lead work together as a highly effective team to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Support and advice from external agencies are sought, where necessary, and referrals are made in a timely way.

Pupils demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of some of the potential risks that they face and how to avoid them. Older pupils, in particular, are very clear about how to stay safe when using the internet. They have a strong understanding of the range of different types of bullying and what to do if it happens to them. They say that bullying in school is rare, and the school's behaviour logs support this.

## Inspection findings

- You promote good attendance through newsletters to parents and rewards for pupils. You take prompt action to support families when their children's attendance begins to fall. As a result of the actions you and your leaders have taken, overall attendance is improving. However, as it is still below the national average, you have rightly identified this as continuing to be an area for improvement.
- In 2016 and 2017, the school's rate for persistent absence was significantly higher than the national rate. You identified the reasons for this and have worked closely with other professionals to support parents experiencing difficulties. This has been very effective at reducing the rate of persistent absence so that it is now in line with the national figure.
- The dip in results in reading and mathematics in 2016 was addressed effectively. In 2017, key stage 2 pupils made progress in these subjects that was significantly above the national average. Progress in writing also improved but was not as strong as that in reading and mathematics. Following closer analysis of writing progress, you implemented a range of strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Although there is evidence of some improvement in the quality of pupils' writing across the school, you acknowledge that there is still more to be done to ensure that the standards in writing match those seen in reading and mathematics.
- In 2017, progress for the most able pupils in Year 6 was below the national average, and well below that of other pupils in the school in reading and writing. During this inspection, we analysed the progress of the most able pupils across the school. We identified that not enough of them are achieving the standards of which they are capable. Although you have taken steps to accelerate the progress of these pupils, you are not yet able to demonstrate a measurable impact on their outcomes.
- During the inspection, observations of teaching and learning were carried out in all year groups. The pupils we saw demonstrated positive attitudes and enjoyment in learning. Effective teaching in Nursery and Reception ensured that children were actively engaged in their learning. In key stage 1, pupils were enjoying learning about fractions. Teachers' clear explanations and knowledge of pupils' learning needs resulted in pupils successfully achieving the learning outcomes. However, as there was insufficient challenge for the most able pupils, these pupils did not deepen their understanding well enough.
- In the mathematics lessons seen in key stage 2, pupils of all abilities grappled well with challenging problems, demonstrating resilience and an enjoyment of this aspect of the curriculum. In these lessons, support for learners was effective, with teachers using questioning well to develop pupils' understanding and clarify their misconceptions. However, teaching in English lessons seen was less effective. Although pupils enjoyed the writing activities, they were not being supported well enough to ensure basic skills, such as the use of sentence punctuation, were developed consistently. In addition, the most able pupils were

not provided with sufficient challenge in reading and writing activities to ensure that they made the progress they are capable of making. This is reflected in the overall outcomes for English.

- We also looked at a range of mathematics and writing books in each of these classes. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that the majority of pupils do make strong progress over time, and this supports the improvement in outcomes indicated in the school's own assessment information. You acknowledge, however, that progress in writing could be stronger for a number of pupils. This is because teachers are not consistently challenging pupils' incorrect use of punctuation and grammar and ensuring that core writing skills are being developed well enough. In addition, younger pupils are not being given sufficient opportunities to write independently to ensure that these basic skills are being embedded early enough.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of higher attaining pupils in English and mathematics is monitored carefully and that these pupils continue to make strong progress and achieve the standards they are capable of achieving
- teachers are held fully to account for the progress made by higher attaining pupils, and that teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils so that more pupils are working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics across the school
- pupils' core writing skills are developed earlier so that these can be effectively built on over time and standards in writing improve for all groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the Trust Board, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Satchwell  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with senior leaders to review the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. We agreed several lines of enquiry to check if the school was maintaining a good standard of education.

Inspectors conducted a learning walk through the school with senior leaders, during which we reviewed work in pupils' books, spoke to pupils and observed learning.

Inspectors listened to readers from Years 2, 3 and 4 and spoke to pupils from across key stage 2. I had a meeting with leaders to discuss assessment and attendance information. I met with representatives from the school's Trust Board.

A range of safeguarding checks were carried out, including a review of the school's single central record and the steps followed when recruiting new members of staff. I had a meeting with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss work with external agencies and how the school supports vulnerable children and their families.

Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including: the school's website; Trust Board minutes; behaviour and bullying logs; the school's self-evaluation; school improvement priorities; training records; and child protection files.

I reviewed the 21 responses to Parent View, and 19 parents' free-text responses. I considered 59 responses to the staff survey and the 66 responses to the pupil survey.