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12 October 2018

Mr Luke Pinder
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pinder

Short inspection of Hall Road Academy

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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. Since your appointment in September 2018, you have made a strong impression on your staff. As a result, they feel listened to and are highly motivated to ensure the continual improvement of the school. You are working in close tandem with your senior leadership team to ensure that pupils achieve highly and pockets of inconsistencies are remedied quickly. You have wasted no time in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. You are analytical in your approach and have an honest and accurate picture of what is working well and what needs to improve. The 'peer challenge' headteachers on the governing board have been instrumental in helping you to hit the ground running. You and your team embrace the high-support and high-challenge culture so that the school keeps improving.

The school has a challenging context, with 15 languages spoken, high mobility and several new pupils who are new to learning English. However, you and your staff embrace and welcome all pupils through the ethos of 'one school and many cultures'. Pupils settle quickly and learn well. You are uncompromising in your desire for all pupils to thrive and achieve highly. This view is endorsed by staff, who buy into the collective vision and said, 'We are one big family who want the best for the pupils.'

Parents and carers, on the whole, are happy with the school. In a short time, they recognise the strenuous efforts made by you and your staff to improve lines of communication. The increased number of letters and use of social media has, at this early stage, improved the flow of communication. Parents in the early years have

regular communication with staff. This is helping to bridge the link between home and school. As a result, staff are able to build on children's strengths and give support where necessary. One parental view, endorsed by many, stated, 'I am happy with my child's progress.'

Governors know the school well. Since it restructured over one year ago, the governing body has used its collective expertise to support and challenge the school. Governors have used a wide range of information to challenge leaders about how well pupils achieve at the end of each key stage. Governors have not been afraid to work with the trust to ensure that the school addresses any dips in performance. Members of the trust have increased their visibility in school. They have provided support for teachers in teaching phonics in a systematic way. Indications suggest this work is bearing fruit and helping pupils to successfully read and write words.

The previous inspection asked leaders to ensure that systems are in place to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that more is outstanding. You and your leaders have taken action to address this issue. You have implemented a new system for good teaching practice in the school to be shared widely so that teachers can learn from each other. Teachers said they feel that support is always there to help them improve and hone their teaching skills. Thus, extensive support and development are ensuring a greater consistency of approach to teaching, learning and assessment for current pupils.

You have correctly pinpointed the few key priorities for improving the school further. You know that this includes making sure that even more pupils reach the higher standards of attainment by the end of each key stage, developing the curriculum in subjects beyond English and mathematics and improving attendance. Actions to address these matters are already underway and are starting to pay off, but there remains more to be done.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A strong culture of safety and security permeates the school. You ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. In addition, new staff are given a comprehensive induction. This ensures that they are alert to any potential warning signs and are fastidious in keeping pupils safe. Pupils told me that they feel happy and safe in school. They are taught well to be safe when using technology, such as the internet.

You ensure that all necessary checks on school staff are carried out and have been double-checked by governors. Your detailed knowledge of vulnerable pupils ensures that you work tirelessly to ensure that they are protected from harm. You are resolute in pursuing referrals with outside agencies to ensure that appropriate and timely action is taken. You place a strong emphasis on the well-being of your pupils, their families and your staff. A nurse visits every week and provides invaluable support and advice where it is needed.

Inspection findings

- The first area we agreed to examine was how leaders support and challenge staff to ensure that pupils are making good progress over time. In recent years, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved year on year and, in 2017, was in line with the national average. Provisional figures in 2018, however, show a dip in performance, and you have taken swift action to address it. You are supporting staff effectively and refreshing their skills with training. Teachers now use a systematic approach to helping pupils learn and apply their sounds when reading and writing. Progress in phonics is good.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2017, pupils reached above average standards of attainment in writing and mathematics, and average standards in reading. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in each of these subjects increased considerably on the previous year. This represented strong progress from pupils' previous starting points. You and your staff are disappointed, however, that in 2018, this improvement has not been sustained. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth dipped. You acknowledge that staff absence had a detrimental impact and halted the pace of improvement. Inspection evidence confirms, however, that current pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics through key stage 1. Even so, you acknowledge that improving the proportion of pupils that reach greater depth by the end of key stage 1 remains an important next step.
- In Year 6 in 2017, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics improved and was broadly average. In these subjects, pupils made good progress. In reading, although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard improved, pupils did not make good progress from their starting points. In particular, too few pupils reached the higher standards. Leaders and teachers responded swiftly. Throughout the school, reading is now given the highest priority. Improving pupils' love of books, including through high-quality texts, and developing reading stamina have been key ingredients in bringing about improvement. Provisional results in Year 6 in 2018 show some improvement already, including the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards. As in key stage 1, however, further increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards by the end of key stage 2 is a priority.
- The previous inspection noted that the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities lagged behind that of other pupils. Recent published information indicates that this is still the case. For this reason, I was keen to look at the quality of teaching and support for these pupils. You ensure that pupils' needs are recognised swiftly and addressed effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils are receiving the support they need. New arrangements to check pupils' progress are now in place. Teachers are being held more effectively to account for making sure pupils achieve well. Even so, you recognise that more work is needed to ensure that the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is as good as that of other pupils with similar starting points.

- I was interested to find out how well the curriculum beyond English and mathematics supports pupils' learning and development. You are passionate about generating a creative and rich curriculum that sparks pupils' interests. The curriculum is well supported by trips and events. Pupils particularly value opportunities to visit new places, for example the theatre and London, which broaden their horizons. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is well developed. Pupils particularly appreciate the school's own rich diversity and are highly respectful of one another and their respective beliefs. You ensure that the physical education and sport premium is used effectively to improve pupils' participation in activities, both during and after school. We agreed that to strengthen the curriculum even further, an important next step is to make sure that, in subjects other than English and mathematics, the expectations of the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn, and the progress they need to make as they move up through the year groups, are clearly and fully established and embedded.
- During the inspection, I also looked at how well pupils behave. Teachers are caring and have good relationships with their pupils. Most pupils behave well, conducting themselves sensibly around the school. They show positive attitudes to learning in class, often displaying a real thirst for knowledge and learning. Teachers are adept at delivering lessons that pique pupils' interest. A newly formed pastoral team resolve any issues effectively to help pupils succeed. Pupils say that any behaviour issues are dealt with firmly and fairly. They appreciate the rewards they receive for meeting the agreed school rules.
- In the past, the number of fixed-term exclusions has been too high. As a result of the school's actions to improve behaviour, including working in close partnership with families and external agencies, the number has decreased dramatically so far this year. Making sure that this reduces even further still remains a priority.
- Over time, attendance has been below average. Too many pupils have been absent too often. You have rightly identified the need to improve attendance, as well as reduce persistent absence. You have already enjoyed some success. Current attendance is better than it was previously. Your well-attended breakfast club is helping to drive up attendance further. Even so, and despite leaders' actions, attendance still requires further improvement to be in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportions of pupils that reach greater depth by the end of Year 2 and the higher standards by the end of Year 6 increase, so that they are at least in line with the proportions that do so nationally in reading, writing and mathematics
- the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities improves so that it is as good as that of other pupils with similar starting points

- the expectations of pupils' learning and progress as they move up through the year groups in subjects beyond English and mathematics are clearly established and fully embedded
- the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent and the number of fixed-term exclusions are further reduced so that they are at least in line with the national averages.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Stillings
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, school leaders and a group of teachers. I also met with pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I met with governors, including holding a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. I also scrutinised governors' minutes. I jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across key stages. I also scrutinised pupils' books and listened to pupils read. I held a meeting with a representative from the trust. I reviewed a range of documents, including attendance information, school policies, the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.