

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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19 October 2018

Miss Denise White  
Principal  
Tree Tops Primary Academy  
Brishing Lane  
Park Wood  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME15 9EZ

Dear Miss White

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tree Tops Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 9 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- secure consistent high-quality teaching and learning, including by strengthening the impact of learning support assistants' work on pupils' outcomes.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive principal, governors, senior leaders and the chief executive officer of Leigh Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT). I also met with other representatives of the MAT to

discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day. Together, you and I visited classrooms to observe learning. I spoke to pupils in lessons, looked at work in their books and met with a group of pupils. I examined a range of documentation provided by leaders, including the school's information on pupils' progress, the outcomes of monitoring activities, and pupils' attendance. I evaluated leaders' plans to improve the school.

## **Context**

You were appointed as principal in November 2017. The new vice principal was appointed in September 2017 and an additional member of staff for the Nursery joined the school in December 2017. Several teachers have joined the school since the previous inspection, although staffing has now stabilised. Since the section 5 inspection, the school's roll has increased from 222 to 268 pupils.

## **Main findings**

You show determined leadership and model the school's mantra, 'Be kind, work hard and expect the best'. You are uncompromising in your expectations for high standards in all areas of the school's work. Since your arrival, after the previous inspection, you have successfully created a promising team of senior and middle leaders who share your ambitious determination to improve the school. You have established an appropriate sense of urgency in this work and there are clear signs of improvement. Improving outcomes for pupils and their well-being are rightly at the heart of all developments. Pupils themselves recognise this positive change, saying the school is now an 'optimistic' place.

The training of all staff, alongside your support for them, and increasingly rigorous performance management procedures are contributing well to improvements in teaching. Your clearly stated high expectations are supporting improved consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Subject leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, are developing a sharper understanding of their responsibility for improving teaching and pupils' outcomes. As a result, and because of the coaching provided by the MAT, the confidence of subject leaders is growing and their effectiveness is developing well.

During my tour of the school and visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was calm and purposeful. Pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities, listened attentively in lessons and took care with the presentation of their work. They were keen to share their learning and proud of their achievements.

You and the early years leader demonstrate considerable expertise in, and passion for, children's development in the early years. Your investment in training all staff means that learning opportunities are now well matched to children's developing needs. As a result, the provision in Nursery and Reception has significantly improved since the previous inspection. Your highly collaborative early years team is working

efficiently and creatively to bring about significant improvement for children. During our visits to the Nursery and Reception classes, we saw children working cooperatively together and adults encouraging children's independence.

Adults show an astute understanding of children's individual needs and ensure that provision is matched. For example, teaching is currently focused on enabling children to hold a pencil successfully and to read and write their own names. Children's speaking and listening are developing well because of adults' skilled questioning. Improvements to the early years outdoor areas are enabling children to develop successfully and safely at their own pace. As a direct result of this improvement in provision, the school's assessment information shows that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of 2018 had increased significantly.

Teaching in key stages 1 and 2 is improving. You and your leadership team swiftly identify any weak teaching and put effective support in place. Your work to improve the effectiveness of learning support assistants is showing some success but the quality of their support for pupils' learning remains variable.

Teachers are providing pupils with greater challenge, notably in mathematics and English. Teachers are successfully developing pupils' stamina for writing by providing them with regular opportunities to write in a range of subjects. In mathematics, pupils are increasingly challenged to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. When they are teaching phonics, in key stage 1, teachers accurately model the sounds that letters represent, blending sounds and segmenting words to ensure that pupils' learning is secure. Across the school, teachers increasingly correct pupils' misconceptions and promptly identify any gaps in their learning. Pupils who may have missed a lesson, or who require further help, are now supported to catch up quickly.

Leaders, including governors, are taking effective action to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and staff are now working more closely with families to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. The positive impact of this work can be seen in the overall increase in attendance. This includes reduced absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and a general reduction in the school's persistent absence. You have a strong understanding of the community the school serves and are continuing to build purposeful and productive relationships with parents. They appreciate your approachability and the vitality you have brought to the school.

The MAT continues to provide timely and focused support to you and senior leaders for all aspects of the school's work. The training provided for staff by Leigh Academies Trust, since the last inspection, has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes. You sensibly use the extensive and helpful services that the MAT can provide wherever appropriate. The MAT's close work with senior and middle leaders, including regular quality assurance visits, is supporting improvement effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of Leigh Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**