

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 December 2018

Miss Christine Nock
Headteacher
Tame Valley Academy
Chillinghome Road
Birmingham
B36 8QJ

Dear Miss Nock

Short inspection of Tame Valley Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 November 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You took up post as headteacher 18 months ago, and since that time have brought about several positive changes to enhance learning for pupils at Tame Valley. You provide strong and determined leadership and have communicated a clear vision for the school's future. You have created a culture where all staff share a common belief that every pupil has the potential to achieve well. Leaders are full of enthusiasm about their work and show commitment to getting the best from pupils. You have a dedicated staff team whose members work hard to help pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to overcome the barriers to learning they often face.

Leaders have an accurate perspective of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know the school very well and put in place well-crafted plans to raise standards of achievement. Leaders ensure that these plans target the right areas for development and are implemented swiftly. For example, leaders successfully introduced a revised approach to the teaching of reading skills in response to a slight fall in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading by the end of key stage 2. Leaders keep a close check on the quality of teaching and learning and provide helpful guidance to staff to ensure that teaching continues to improve.

There is good capacity within the leadership team to enable the school to move from strength to strength. Recent appointments to the school's leadership team

have proven effective, and these new staff have already started to make their mark. In a short time, they have developed a good knowledge of the needs of the pupils. Leaders use this information well to work collaboratively with other staff and enable them to develop practice within their subject areas. Results from the staff survey indicate that staff feel valued and appreciate the opportunities leaders give them to extend their knowledge and develop new skills. Staff morale is high, and this contributes well to the positive climate for learning within the school.

Because of effective leadership, the overall quality of teaching continues to be good and pupils' progress has generally remained positive and broadly in line with national averages. Pupils' achievement in phonics has improved year-on-year since the last inspection, with the latest set of Year 1 results being better than the national average. In addition, leaders have reversed the previous decline in pupils' progress in writing. However, there is still further work to do, particularly in relation to improving pupils' handwriting and expanding their editing skills.

Leaders have made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers, particularly those new to the profession, benefit from opportunities to observe and learn from more experienced teachers. This is helping them to improve their practice. In addition, standards in writing have risen as a result of an effective school improvement strategy. It is particularly evident that pupils now benefit from the many opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects.

Parents and carers speak favourably about the school and recognise the positive changes that leaders have brought about. Parents of children who had recently joined the school told me that their children had settled in very well and had made many new friends. This was not surprising, given the number of pupils who show care and consideration for other pupils in school. The school is a very inclusive environment where everyone is made to feel welcome and valued.

Pupils at Tame Valley thoroughly enjoy their learning, and it is easy to see why. From the moment pupils walk through the school doors, there is a sense of calm, a friendly face to greet them, and a committed team of staff who provide consistency and encouragement to all pupils. This contributes to the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning evident in all classrooms.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' safety and welfare are at the forefront of everyone's mind. Staff are well trained and equipped to spot and report any concerns about a child's welfare. They deal with any safeguarding matters sensitively and promptly, and make decisions in the best interests of the child. Record-keeping is thorough and shows that leaders act, without delay, when a child is at risk of harm. Leaders have good systems in place to identify vulnerable pupils and put in place early help to support both pupils and their families.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for

purpose. Governors have good oversight of safeguarding arrangements and ensure that all members of staff appointed have been subject to the necessary vetting procedures. Leaders tailor safeguarding training carefully to meet the needs of staff. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of specific safeguarding concerns, including the current situation of 'county lines'.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' efforts to improve the teaching of writing across the school have paid dividends. Teachers now adopt a structured approach to writing so that pupils' skills are developed sequentially over a period of time. Teachers ensure that pupils are well equipped with the necessary skills before they embark on a writing task. For example, pupils in Year 6 effectively secured their understanding of direct and indirect speech before writing a news report about the outlaw, Robin Hood.
- Pupils' progress in writing across key stage 1 is typically good from their relatively low starting points. Historically, between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2, pupils made slower progress in writing compared to reading and mathematics. However, in 2018, this situation reversed, and pupils made better progress than previous years. The proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 was slightly above the national average.
- Pupils write confidently for a range of purposes and show a good awareness of audience. They write coherently, and at length, about topics which interest them. Boys and girls show equal interest in writing. Pupils edit their writing, although this is usually no more than a proofreading task. Pupils' editing skills are less well developed. They often focus too much on the punctuation aspects of writing. Teachers do not challenge pupils enough to think about how they could improve the content and quality of their writing. The quality of pupils' handwriting is variable, and their letters are sometimes not well formed because handwriting is not taught consistently well.
- Leaders revised the school's approach to behaviour management at the start of this academic year. The new system has been well received by pupils, who enjoy working towards various rewards. They have a good understanding of the system and say that it helps them to behave well. Typically, pupils' behaviour is very good. They support each other in lessons and play together sensibly on the playground. Pupils show genuine care for each other and are respectful of individual differences.
- Staff adopt a consistent approach to the management of pupils' behaviour. Leaders make their expectations explicit and provide good-quality training for staff to ensure that they understand and implement the school's agreed approach to dealing with behaviour. Teachers' personalised support for those pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour is effective. Staff work closely with parents and carers and ensure that the messages given in school are extended to the home. This is so they can be consistently reinforced at both home and school.
- Incidents of very poor behaviour are extremely rare. Leaders use exclusion as a last resort, and only for the most serious behaviour issues. The number of pupils

excluded has fallen since 2016. No pupils have been excluded so far this academic year.

- Up until recently, pupils' attendance has been a perennial problem. By the end of the academic year 2017, absence figures were in the highest 10% of all schools nationally. However, leaders' sharp and relentless focus on improving attendance has begun to make a difference. Pupils' attendance has started to improve. By the end of last academic year, pupils' attendance had increased, although it remained below the national average figure. Persistent absence has also been a concern. However, the 2018 figure showed a marked improvement on previous years and is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils achieve well in physical education (PE) because staff plan and deliver engaging sessions which enable pupils to be involved in plenty of physical activity. Pupils are knowledgeable about the health benefits of regular exercise and show good attitudes to healthy living.
- Leaders use the PE and school sport funding well to extend the range of sporting opportunities for pupils. Consequently, pupils experience a wide range of sports including golf, archery, curling and gymnastics. A significant proportion of the school population participate in, and have success in, local sports tournaments. The school has achieved several accolades in sport including the 'School Games Gold Mark award' for 2017/2018. Leaders have not published the PE and sport premium strategy on the school website, therefore parents are not fully informed about some aspects of the school's exciting work in PE and sport.
- Pupils experience regular personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons which equip them with important skills and knowledge to make informed choices about a range of topics. Teachers also teach sessions which help pupils make sense of, and respond to, current affairs such as the demolition of nearby high-rise flats. However, the current long-term PSHE plan is not implemented fully. This means that leaders cannot be certain whether all pupils have been taught the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding referred to in the PSHE programme of work. Leaders are currently reviewing the PSHE curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are taught how to edit and improve their writing more effectively
- handwriting is taught consistently well so that all pupils develop a neat, cursive style of writing
- leaders ensure that all pupils have access to a high-quality PSHE curriculum which prepares them well for the future
- the PE school sport premium strategy is published on the school's website to inform parents of the school's work.

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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the

Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's current evaluation of the quality of education it offers and the school improvement plan. I met with middle school leaders to discuss their impact on the school's work relating to teaching, learning and assessment. I met with staff responsible for safeguarding arrangements and talked to a group of staff about safeguarding protocols. I examined a range of documents including the school's current self-evaluation and development plan, safeguarding information, school policies and documentation related to governance. I briefly observed learning in the Reception class and Years 1 to 6. I looked at a range of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. I met with a representative from the University of Wolverhampton multi-academy trust.

I took into consideration 23 responses from the pupil survey, 15 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and 19 responses from the staff survey. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day.