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17 January 2019

Mrs Roulla Gabriel  
Principal  
Hockley Heath Academy  
School Road  
Hockley Heath  
Solihull  
West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Gabriel

### **Short inspection of Hockley Heath Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 March 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 have sustained the strengths that were identified at the time and have built upon the strong foundations you inherited.

Your vision for the school is clear. Everything is centred upon meeting pupils' needs and providing the very best for them. You and your leadership team work diligently to bring this vision to life.

Some aspects of the school's work are exceptionally strong. It is a welcoming, harmonious community. Everyone works together for the common good. Pupils love coming to school. They rarely stay away. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the extra lengths the school will go to on their children's behalf. Pupils are confident and socially mature. They take pride in their achievements. Staff share your ambition. They are proud to work at the school.

When children join the school, either in the Nursery or Reception classes, they bring skills that are well developed in comparison to typical two-, three- or four-year-olds. This provides the basis for high attainment across the school. You and your staff maintain these standards by ensuring that pupils make steady progress from year to year. As a result, scores in national assessments are above average in almost all cases.

If a pupil has fallen behind in their learning, they usually make strong progress and catch up well. Some of the highest prior attainers are building well from their starting points and achieving exceptionally high standards. For some pupils, attainment is not as high as it should be, given their capabilities. They could do even better. This issue was identified at the previous inspection. You have tackled it with some success. However, there is still more that you could do.

Leaders are, understandably, pleased that attainment is high. However, in focusing on high test scores, leaders have not always taken enough account of pupils' progress from their starting points. As a result, leaders' view of the quality of education is a little overgenerous. This is one reason why some pupils are not doing as well as they could.

A few teachers still allow pupils to hand in careless work. This is another factor that limits the progress of some pupils. Inspectors noted this at the previous inspection. They reported that some pupils used incorrect spelling, grammar and punctuation and that some pupils' handwriting was untidy. Overall, this is better now, but not universally. Basic errors continue to undermine the quality of some pupils' work whenever they are writing.

Leaders and governors are aware that they need to hold themselves to account for the quality of education provided in the school. This is to their credit, particularly given that the structure of governance provides limited channels of internal accountability for senior leaders and governors. To that end, leaders seek the services of reputable external consultants and the local authority to validate their own view of the school's effectiveness. In some ways, this has been very useful. However, some of the advice given has focused too heavily on the high test results and has not balanced this information with evidence that pupils make only average progress by the end of key stage 2 from their high starting points. In this way, leaders have not been as well supported in their drive for improvement as they hoped to have been.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' welfare is central to the school's culture. It is a highly caring school. This ethos drives staff to actively promote pupils' safety and their well-being. Staff know pupils very well. They are attuned to signs that a pupil may not be happy. If staff think there is a problem, they act immediately. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They make sure that staff are well trained in spotting the signs that pupils may be at risk and that they know what to do in response. Manageable systems are in place that enable concerns to be logged swiftly so that help can be given quickly. Leaders work closely with other agencies to access support for pupils and their families as necessary.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have, in the past, relied heavily on high test scores as evidence for judging the quality of education. They have not focused closely enough on the progress pupils make from their starting points. Attainment is high. However, progress could be stronger.
- Leaders want pupils to achieve as well as possible. That is why leaders have raised their minimum expectations for pupils' progress. As a result, more are now reaching the higher standards of which they are capable. However, this is not the case for all. Some still need to do better, particularly in their writing. This is because, in the past, leaders have not focused as closely on pupils' progress as they are now doing.
- Children enter the early years with very high skill levels for their ages. They build well on these in many areas of learning. This is particularly so in early reading and writing.
- Pupils achieve well in a wide range of subjects. They confidently use their reading, writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum. They thoroughly enjoy the themed topics that bring together knowledge from different subjects.
- The quality and content of pupils' writing in all subjects is generally strong, but is sometimes limited by basic spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors.
- Leaders keep a check on the quality of teaching. They provide helpful feedback to teachers on what is working well and what needs to improve. In some cases, this has made a notable, positive difference to pupils' progress. For example, at the beginning of the year, some younger pupils were struggling to write their numbers the correct way round. Leaders asked the teacher to pay more attention to this. Pupils' books show an instant and lasting improvement from that point forward. However, leaders' advice does not always lead to such success. Having identified that some teachers permit pupils to hand in untidy writing, leaders asked teachers to be more vigilant. Despite this, the problem persists in some classes. This is because some teachers did not follow the instruction and leaders did not check whether pupils' work had improved.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils routinely build on their high prior attainment by making stronger progress across a wider range of subjects by the end of key stage 2
- all teachers insist that pupils use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, appropriate to their age, when they are writing
- leaders ensure that all feedback to teachers leads to immediate and lasting improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body (who is also chair of the board of trustees), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's

services for Solihull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the vice principal, other school staff and a group of governors (who are also the trustees of the Hockley Heath Academy Trust), including the chair. I spoke informally to pupils in lessons. I considered the 33 responses to the Parent View survey, the 18 free-text responses from parents and the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire. I visited lessons with you and the deputy principal and looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I considered the school's self-evaluation, its plans for development, a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection, and took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress.