

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



21 January 2019

Mr Allan Shephard
Executive Principal
George Betts Primary Academy
West End Avenue
Smethwick
West Midlands
B66 1RE

Dear Mr Shephard

Short inspection of George Betts Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

George Betts Primary Academy is a very positive and highly inclusive school community. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved, well-mannered and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. All the parents I spoke with are pleased with the care and education you and the staff provide for their children. You, the governors and staff are very committed to the school's core values, as stated in your welcome message to parents on the school's website, 'learning for life'. Pupils benefit enormously from the many and varied curriculum activities, topics, visits and creative arts projects provided by the school. Your ambition for this school is reflected in leaders' aims, which are clearly set out in the school's improvement plan, 'to develop George Betts as a world class organisation'. Together with the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, of which the school is a member, and the local governing board, you manage a highly effective working federation between George Betts and its outstanding partner primary academy, Shireland Hall.

The school's success is clearly reflected in the wide range of national awards and recognitions of excellence it has achieved in many areas, including those for: staff training and development, sport, and the creative and performing arts. This is in

addition to the local and national recognition of subject and curriculum expertise among key practitioners in the senior and middle leadership teams. The links established with other schools across the multi-academy trust and beyond enable leaders and staff to see and share best practice.

Leaders and staff provide a curriculum and enrichment activities that make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and their families come from a very wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Teachers and support staff embrace this diversity and encourage the school's 'global community' to share and appreciate cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition, pupils adopt core British values of tolerance and democracy, as well as respecting the views, beliefs and values of others.

You and your staff have improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers and support staff are now much more adept at intervening while pupils work in lessons. Staff provide the right support and guidance to pupils to help them improve and correct their work. This was the main area for improvement cited at the time of the previous inspection. However, there is scope now to focus more on the achievement of the most able pupils. National test results for reading, writing and mathematics show that some pupils fall short of reaching the higher standard or learning in greater depth. In addition, some pupils struggle with basic calculations when working out number problems mentally.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and national test results show that their progress compares well with pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged. There is also strong provision for the many pupils who join the school speaking little or no English. The multilingual and bilingual strategies provided by teachers and support staff are utilised very well to support pupils learning English as an additional language. There are many remarkable examples of pupils whose home languages are not English and who make excellent progress to reach or exceed age-related standards in reading and writing. This was also evident when I spoke to parents at the start of the day. Some of their children were happy to interpret and translate my discussions with parents who only spoke languages other than English.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff vetting and checking systems are rigorous. All the parents and pupils I spoke with agree that pupils are safe in school. One of the key lines of enquiry for this inspection focused upon last year's spike in persistent absenteeism. Evidence indicates that you and the staff adopt a caring and diligent approach to following up on absenteeism. This ensures that pupils are safe when not in school. Your approach is also helping to encourage some families to send their children to school regularly and on time.

There are well-defined and clear referral procedures so that teaching, support, administrative and ancillary staff are aware of whom to go to if they are concerned about a child's welfare or safety.

Inspection findings

- You and senior and middle leadership teams have maintained strong and highly effective leadership since the previous inspection. Governors, teachers and support staff have high expectations of pupils. The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and its directors challenge and support leaders and staff very effectively.
- Leaders provide a well-devised and broad curriculum. Music, sport and the creative and fine arts are strong features of the school's work. This helps to broaden pupils' learning experiences and prepare them for the next stages of their education. The magnificent art galleries and examples of previous exhibitions are very good examples of the school's excellent creative curriculum. There are also notable achievements in sporting excellence, for example when pupils are selected to play for junior teams in local professional football clubs.
- Early years provision is very effective and is expertly managed in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Increasingly more children reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. This too is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Children experience varied and stimulating opportunities to play and learn together in safe and secure indoor and outdoor areas.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is highly effective in both the early years and key stage 1. Pupils make excellent progress in relation to low starting points. Most children join the early years with skills and abilities, particularly in language and communication, that are typically well below their age expectations. Pupils make very good progress learning to read and write. This also includes the many pupils who join the school at different times in key stages 1 and 2 and who are in the very early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- In most classes, teachers offer the right level of challenge for the most able pupils. However, there are occasions when teachers do not adapt tasks enough, or miss opportunities to extend pupils' learning further. For example, in some lessons the most able pupils go over work they have already learned rather than starting lessons with 'greater depth tasks'.
- There is an excellent range of high-quality, independent writing in pupils' books and on displays. This reflects well on the school's broader curriculum, but also demonstrates that even more pupils are capable of reading and writing in greater depth. Typically, pupils achieve well in mathematics because the subject is well taught across the school. However, there is still room for improvement. Some pupils do not use the most efficient mental arithmetic techniques to solve some basic number problems.
- Teachers and support staff are very imaginative and adept at combining interesting topics to stimulate opportunities for pupils to read widely and write independently. For example, at one of the well-attended, termly, parent workshops, the topic of fire safety was combined with family-based learning activities linked to a recent topic pupils had covered about The Great Fire of London. The event included opportunities for Year 2 pupils to show their parents

what they had been learning in school.

- The wider curriculum, enrichment activities and educational visits are well planned to make learning interesting and varied. Leaders' ambitious approach to this enables pupils to enjoy school and learning. In addition to raising aspirations, for example by providing pupils with opportunities to visit universities, the curriculum is planned to raise expectations. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as 'geographers', 'historians', or 'scientists'. It was lovely to see messages such as, 'We are historians' (or scientists or geographers), portrayed on classroom doors, reflecting the current topic being studied by each class.
- The welfare, care and attention given to pupils are strong features of the school's work. The well-being team of staff are very skilled at working with pupils and their families and provide very good pastoral support. Pupils themselves say they love coming to school. I could see how keen they were as they waved goodbye to their families and entered in the morning with smiles on their faces. Pupils expressed to me, on many occasions, why they like school so much. As one pupil stated, with others in her group agreeing, 'We learn a lot and our teachers want us to succeed.' Others have expressed how they feel trusted. One pupil told me, 'Everyone really cares about you here and we always try to help each other.' I was very encouraged by these and many more thoughts and reflections expressed by pupils and staff.
- The many and varied high-quality displays of writing, artwork, certificates, trophies and awards show that the school is progressing very well on its journey towards excellence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sustain improvements to pupils' progress and achievements, by:
 - teaching more effective and consistent strategies in mathematics lessons to improve pupils' mental arithmetic skills
 - offering more challenge and adapting tasks for the most able pupils to help more of them reach higher standards and learn in greater depth.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the two vice principals throughout the day's inspection. We all visited parts of lessons together in most classes. I also met with the middle leadership team, the chair of the local governing board, and the senior regional director and chief executive officer of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust. During our visits to lessons, we observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils and staff. I also spoke with pupils at lunchtime and met with a group in the afternoon. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses to the school's most recent surveys of parents' views. I analysed the 19 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 44 responses to the parent survey. I scrutinised the school's improvement plan and leaders' own evaluations of the school's work. We discussed and checked monitoring files and assessments of pupils' work and progress. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding.