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Mr Richard Machin
Headteacher
Finham Primary School
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Dear Mr Machin

Short inspection of Finham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. A lot has changed over that time, including revised policies and structures, as well as many new members of staff. The school joined Finham Park Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in April 2016. Since then, you have completely revised the school's curriculum, introducing new approaches to teaching and learning. Pupils are now making stronger progress and attainment is improving.

The work of the school is set around the school's key values of teamwork, respect, integrity, enjoyment and discipline. As a result, the school is a positive and welcoming environment where adults and pupils have high expectations for what can be achieved. Leaders and governors are keen to develop the 'whole child'. This means that, in addition to following the national curriculum closely, pupils are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle, learn a musical instrument and develop hobbies and skills. The 'Finham experience' outlines a range of opportunities and experiences that all pupils will have by the end of Year 6, including sleeping under the stars, attending a major event and representing the school in some way. These opportunities help to develop pupils' independence and self-confidence.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at your previous inspection. Teachers' planning is now based on an innovative approach, focusing on developing pupils' skills from the early years through to the end of key stage 2 and beyond. It takes account of pupils' prior learning and their current needs, providing opportunities for pupils to explore, clarify, practise and extend their skills. Teachers are aware of the expectations that pupils will need to achieve

in later years and, as a result, pupils are increasingly well prepared for secondary school. Interventions are in place to give additional support to pupils who require extra help or who can work at a higher standard. These changes have brought about improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, leaders and governors are aware that some pupils could make stronger progress and achieve even more.

Governance has been strengthened since joining the MAT. Additional training has been provided and there are clear lines of accountability. The MAT monitors the school's performance on a termly basis. Consequently, governors are increasingly well informed and are becoming more confident in challenging leaders about all aspects of the school's work.

The majority of parents and carers spoken to, or who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the work of the school. They commented on the good progress their children make, the approachability of staff and the high level of support that you and your staff provide. However, a number of parents expressed concerns that the school does not respond well enough to issues they raise and does not deal with bullying effectively. During the inspection, I did not find evidence that pupils were unhappy, and pupils spoken to were confident that any problems in relation to poor behaviour are dealt with rapidly. The school's behaviour systems are clear and understood by staff and pupils. Records show that staff and leaders tackle behaviour issues consistently. Nevertheless, parents' responses indicate that some parents think that leaders and governors do not respond to their concerns well enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding within the school and all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your staff know the pupils well and you use this knowledge to provide effective support to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Through the curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance remains above the national average.

All staff have regular and appropriate training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have any safeguarding concerns. You work closely with a range of external agencies and you are persistent in following up any concerns about a pupil's welfare. You have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the school. Governors and representatives of the MAT understand their role in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding and in monitoring the effectiveness of school procedures.

Inspection findings

- With the support of the MAT, you and your staff have taken decisive action to improve pupils' achievement across the school. In 2018, outcomes at the end of

key stage 1 were above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics and rates of progress across key stage 2 improved. The proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving at the higher standards for their age increased and was in line with the national average. You credit a number of these improvements to changes in your curriculum.

- Over the past two years, you have introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. There is an increased focus on pupils applying their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and being able to explain their reasoning. Pupils are regularly encouraged to challenge themselves and they are not afraid to make mistakes. This is helping to develop pupils' confidence and increasing their enjoyment of the subject.
- You and your staff recognised that while pupils could read quite fluently, they did not always understand what they were reading about. Consequently, you introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading which focuses on reading for meaning and reading 'real books'. This is beginning to make a positive difference to pupils' comprehension skills and their attitudes to reading.
- The books pupils read in class are, wherever practical, related to other aspects of the curriculum. For example, Year 6 recently studied 'The Invention of Hugo Cabret', which linked to their work in science and technology, and Year 2 pupils' current project on Africa is connected to 'Tinga Tinga Tales' and learning about the story of chocolate.
- The developments in reading have, in turn, created relevant and meaningful writing opportunities for pupils. Pupils now regularly write at length and across a variety of subjects. This is closely linked to the application of spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. As a result, pupils are making strong progress in writing across the school.
- Pupil premium funding to support pupils who are disadvantaged is spent effectively to provide additional academic and pastoral support. Funding is also used to ensure that 'all pupils have access to everything the school has to offer'. Due to the relatively small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each cohort, headline figures can vary quite considerably from one year to the next. However, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress.
- The curriculum developments you have introduced are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Nevertheless, you and your governors are not complacent about outcomes and you are aware that approaches need to be embedded and further refined to maximise their impact.
- Planning for the curriculum is based on a six-weekly cycle, which includes a training day involving all staff and leaders working together. Staff value these days as they enable them to share expertise and use time efficiently. Almost all staff say that this approach has improved their work-life balance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- developments in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are embedded to secure strong progress and outcomes for all groups of pupils
- communication with parents, especially those raising concerns, is timely and appropriate.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the MAT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff. I met with four representatives of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the MAT. I also spoke to representatives of Coventry City Council on the telephone. I talked with some parents at the start of, and during, the school day and I spoke informally with some key stage 2 pupils at breaktime.

Together with the deputy headteacher, we visited almost all classes, with the exception of Year 5 who were out of school on a residential trip. We observed teaching and learning, spoke to some pupils and looked at examples of their work. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I scrutinised a sample of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.

I took account of the 70 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 45 free-text comments. I also took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.