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Louise Brammer
Principal
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Dear Mrs Brammer

Short inspection of Eaton Park Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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. You and your team of committed senior leaders have created a motivating and inspiring learning environment in which pupils thrive. Stimulating displays of pupils' high-quality work adorn every corridor and shared space, valuing pupils' efforts and celebrating their achievements. The school is a happy and positive community where staff ensure that every pupil is well supported to achieve their best, not only academically but also in becoming well-rounded and confident individuals.

You have successfully sustained and built upon the strengths identified at the previous inspection. As a result, pupils continue to achieve well and by the time they leave Year 6, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above the national average. In 2018, pupils' progress was significantly above average and in the highest 10%. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They have rightly identified that teaching and learning are not as strong in the wider curriculum as they are in English and mathematics. Development plans include relevant actions to address this.

Almost all parents who spoke to me, or responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are highly positive about the school and would recommend it to others. Staff are proud to work at the school. They say that they are well supported by leaders to carry out their roles effectively. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online

questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed and that pupils make good progress.

Pupils are proud to attend Eaton Park. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic about their learning. In lessons, pupils work hard and cooperate well with their peers. They demonstrate the school's 'master' values (moral, adaptable, successful, thoughtful, enthusiastic, respectable) through their behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite. They show respect for others and know the importance of treating everyone equally. One pupil explained: 'Even though we are all different, we are all the same even if we have different hair colour or skin colour or different religions.'

You and the leadership team have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection successfully. You have introduced a new handwriting scheme, which all teachers follow consistently. In the early years, children take part in activities such as 'disco dough' and 'funky fingers' to develop their fine motor skills in readiness to write. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils take great pride in their written work and their handwriting is of a high standard. Pupils form their letters correctly, and in key stage 2 most pupils join their handwriting fluently. The teaching of writing now focuses on ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation appropriate to their age. Work in books shows that pupils apply these skills in their writing across the curriculum. Over the past three years, pupils' attainment in writing at the end of Year 2 has risen to be in line with the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils' attainment in writing remains below that of other pupils nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils' progress in writing is very strong and attainment is high. This includes disadvantaged pupils. In 2018, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth at the end of each key stage also rose to be above national averages. Work in books shows that current pupils are achieving similarly well.

Governors bring a range of expertise to their roles. They share leaders' high ambitions for pupils and provide effective support and challenge to leaders to continually improve the school. Governors have a detailed understanding of what is working well and the current priorities because they make regular visits to see the school's work at first-hand. They produce thorough reports of their visits and identify next steps for leaders to address, which they later check on. Governors are not complacent and attend training and seek external advice to refine their skills further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding checks on staff, governors and volunteers are thorough. Staff receive appropriate training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe, including from extremism and radicalisation. They know the signs to look for that might indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff are confident about the process they should follow if they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare. Leaders provide support for pupils and their

families and refer concerns to other agencies when necessary.

Leaders have worked hard to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. They monitor pupils' attendance closely and follow up pupils' absence swiftly to ensure that they are safe. Leaders provide support for families to help pupils to attend school more regularly, for example through the provision of a school minibus to collect pupils from home each day. As a result, persistent absence has reduced over the past 18 months and is currently below the national average.

Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. They learn about the importance of having their own views and not being influenced by others. One pupil explained, 'If you want to believe it you can but it is your decision. You have the right to say no.' Pupils say that bullying is rare at Eaton Park and leaders' records support this. Pupils know to tell an adult if they are being bullied or if they see it happening to someone else. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agree their children are happy, safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- In previous years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was in line with that found nationally. In 2018, this dipped to below the national average. This was mostly due to children having lower starting points than previous cohorts and an unusually high number of children joining the school from different settings.
- Children in the early years benefit from a good start to their education. Adults make regular assessments of children's learning and use these to plan activities that match children's needs closely. In guided activities, work in reading, writing and mathematics is carefully tailored to children's next steps in learning. This supports all children to make strong progress from their different starting points. Adults model writing accurately and ensure that children form letters correctly. Children use their phonics skills well to attempt to spell increasingly complex words.
- The early years team plans a wide range of stimulating activities. As a result, children demonstrate high levels of engagement and sustain their concentration well. Work in learning journals shows that children enjoy a breadth of experiences that develops their knowledge, understanding and skills across the different areas of learning. Adults place an emphasis on developing children's speech and language skills, particularly those of disadvantaged children. This improves children's readiness to learn and ensures that they can communicate clearly.
- Warm and positive relationships mean that children are confident to share their ideas in whole-class teaching and to 'have a go' in their independent learning. Adults engage enthusiastically with children and encourage them to persevere in their learning. Well-established routines help to develop children's independence. For example, children know that if they go to an activity and there are too many children there, they need to choose a different task. Children learn happily alongside one another, sharing resources and taking turns.

- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Governors know how the funding is spent and leaders evaluate the difference that this spending is making to pupils' outcomes. As well as providing academic support, leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils have access to a range of enrichment opportunities to support their wider development.
- Disadvantaged pupils make extremely strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2. However, in the early years and key stage 1, these pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils in the school and nationally, particularly in writing. Leaders recognise this and have recently refined the way in which they support disadvantaged pupils. Interventions are now more flexible and responsive to pupils' needs. For example, if pupils have a misconception in their learning, adults respond to this on the same day and provide pupils with the help they need to secure their understanding.
- Teachers know the disadvantaged pupils in their classes well. In the lessons we visited, these pupils were engaged in their learning. Work in books shows that they are making the progress they should. The school's assessment information indicates that there is little difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school. However, disadvantaged pupils need to make even greater progress to diminish the differences between their attainment and other pupils in the school and nationally by the end of key stage 1, especially in writing.
- Leaders are in the process of reviewing the school's wider curriculum. They have given careful thought to the design of the curriculum, with the aim of building pupils' knowledge as well as providing rich and exciting experiences to spark their interests. However, this work is in its infancy and work in books shows that learning in subjects such as history and geography is not sequenced well enough. As a result, pupils do not develop a sufficiently deep knowledge and understanding of the topics they study.
- Teachers plan a range of trips and visitors to enrich the curriculum. Pupils I spoke to talked enthusiastically about visits to the dinosaur museum, the zoo and the blue planet aquarium, along with annual visits to the theatre. 'Cultural week' provides an opportunity for pupils to spend focused time learning about different faiths and cultures. However, as with other wider curriculum subjects, teaching does not deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently. This means that pupils find it difficult to recall some of what they have learned previously, for example about different religions and British values.
- Pupils appreciate the vast range of extra-curricular activities on offer. These enable pupils to follow their interests and develop skills in a multitude of areas such as singing, art, cooking, gardening and creative writing. Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium funding to increase pupils' participation in physical activity. Different sports are promoted through after-school clubs, including football, rugby, dodgeball, mini-golf, running and athletics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching across the wider curriculum develops and deepens pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, enabling them to make consistently strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics
- disadvantaged pupils in the early years and key stage 1 make even greater progress in order to diminish the differences in achievement between these pupils and other pupils nationally, particularly in writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of academy, the two vice principals, the early years foundation stage leader and the leader of the Reception Year. I also met with the chair of governors and four members of the governing body. Together with the head of academy and two vice principals, I observed pupils' learning in parts of seven lessons. Together with you and senior leaders, I looked at pupils' work in a range of books. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils in lessons. I also took into account the 297 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I listened to a group of pupils read. I examined a range of documentation, including information relating to current pupils' progress, the school's development plan and leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents, including information relating to pupils' attendance. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered the 42 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.