

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 March 2019

Mrs Hayley Carrier
Headteacher
The Orchards Primary Academy
Rhayader Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B31 1TX

Dear Mrs Carrier

Short inspection of The Orchards Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Shortly after the last inspection you were appointed as the headteacher and, since then, there have been several staff changes, including at senior leadership level. Almost all of the local governing board (LGB) were not in post at the previous inspection. In the recent past, there has been a high turnover of staff. You and other leaders have managed this staff instability well. Leaders provide effective support and training for staff new to post and for those who are developing in their roles.

You and other leaders are aspirational for your pupils. You are very focused on ensuring that pupils are taught well and achieve strong outcomes. The school's self-evaluation is incisive and thorough. Leaders' meticulous analysis of pupils' progress and attainment ensures that they tackle any areas for development swiftly. Their high expectations ensure that they continue to strive for improvement in the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils are even better.

Governors are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The LGB monitors school improvement priorities and outcomes through reports from school leaders and reports from the director of academies of the multi-academy trust (MAT). Governors offer support and challenge appropriately by questioning the actions of school leaders and checking the impact. The LGB has recently appointed link governors who meet with subject leaders to evaluate their work. Governors visit

regularly to see improvements in the school at first hand. However, currently there is no planned strategic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of school improvement priorities or meetings with subject leaders.

The MAT provides effective support and challenge to the school. Leaders and teachers benefit from the training opportunities that the MAT provides as well as opportunities to share good practice with other academies in the trust. MAT directors have established strong and positive relationships with the local governing board. MAT visits are regular, focused and thorough. This ensures that MAT directors know the school well and have a clear oversight of the impact of school leaders on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and attainment.

Most parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were positive about the school. A small minority of parents raised some concerns about bullying and behaviour and the school's response to concerns. However, other parents say that staff are approachable and respond to concerns well. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated in school and if it does happen, teachers sort it out quickly. Inspection evidence supported these views.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous. They hold doors open for staff and visitors. In lessons, they are attentive and focused. They say that 'it is ok to be different in this school'. They are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Some pupils are 'maths mentors' or 'reading ambassadors' and help other pupils with their learning. Leaders actively encourage pupils to have a say through the school parliament.

Leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result, attainment for the most able pupils has increased substantially at both key stage 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Support from senior leaders helps make sure that teachers plan work that is at the right level for pupils. For example, in mathematics teachers help pupils choose different levels of challenge to stretch themselves and pupils now have greater opportunities to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge on a regular basis.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The procedures for the recruitment of staff and the reporting of concerns are thorough. They are checked regularly by school leaders, governors and the MAT. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are vigilant in their approach and are comfortable in escalating any concerns about pupils or staff if necessary. Leaders ensure that staff and governors are well trained in areas such as the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders are mindful of local issues such as gang culture and ensure that pupils receive the necessary information to equip them with appropriate knowledge to stay as safe as possible. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. For example, they know about different types of bullying and how to

stay safe on the internet.

Inspection findings

- Historically, although pupils' attainment has been above or close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, attainment at the higher standard has been below the national average. This has improved substantially in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils are challenged effectively in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in writing, pupils are developing a greater understanding of sophisticated vocabulary and use this well to make their writing interesting to read. In mathematics, pupils respond well to 'killer questions' and explore several possible answers to questions, for example. They are challenged to deepen their learning and apply their mathematical understanding in solving problems. Teachers build on pupils' prior learning effectively, and learning is sequenced appropriately. Pupils are supported well to achieve high standards through the use of resources, clear expectations and an understanding of what a good piece of work looks like. Pupils have the opportunity to write interesting and descriptive pieces, for example about the rainforest or a letter written as a character in a book. However, although pupils generally write well, on occasion teachers do not have high enough expectations for their handwriting and presentation. The school's handwriting policy is not consistently followed.
- Leaders have recently begun to review the school's curriculum plans because they recognise that standards in subjects such as history and geography are not as strong as in English and mathematics. The progression of skills and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics is not sufficiently developed. The curriculum does, however, offer pupils a range of experiences as part of the school's curriculum promise. Pupils learn about authors, composers, scientists and artists to further develop their cultural knowledge. Pupils have opportunities to visit science laboratories in the city and make links with the university to raise their aspirations. Recently, as part of science week, pupils entered a competition to create projects about influential scientists. The winning pupils visited The Big Bang Fair at the National Exhibition Centre. Pupils enjoy educational visits and residential experiences to enhance their learning, such as visits to museums, a local airfield or Symphony Hall. They enjoy enriching experiences such as a Roman day and an Egyptian day with visiting speakers. They learn about different faiths and discuss current issues such as how plastic affects the planet. Pupils take part in after-school clubs such as multi-sports, gardening and recorders, and, before school, pupils in Years 5 and 6 attend a mathematics club. This all contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In 2018, pupils' absence was slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent was also greater than the national average, especially for girls. As a result of close monitoring and effective support and intervention from the school's educational welfare officer and attendance officer, persistent absence has reduced and is much closer to the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors further develop their roles and establish a strategic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of school improvement priorities
- teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation and follow the school's handwriting policy consistently
- leaders continue to develop curriculum plans that ensure the progressive development of pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the director of academies 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

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and senior staff. I met with the chair and members of the local governing board. I also met with the director of academies of the MAT. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the nine written responses and one letter. I also considered the results of the school's own questionnaire for parents and the 17 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I spoke to pupils informally during the day. With school leaders, I observed teaching and learning and reviewed the work in pupils' books. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, safeguarding records, behaviour logs, the self-evaluation document and school improvement plan. I observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day, in lessons, on the playground and in the dining room.