

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



16 April 2019

Shaukat Islam  
Executive Headteacher  
Yew Tree Community School  
Yew Tree Road  
Aston  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B6 6RX

Dear Mr Islam

### **Short inspection of Yew Tree Community School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 April 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 May 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.

You and your leadership team provide strong and effective leadership. There are many aspects of the school's work that have improved since the predecessor school's last inspection. Staff morale is high and is reflected in the very positive responses from staff to Ofsted's online survey. You and the staff team promote and uphold the school's values, as stated on its website, 'Learning together and inspiring success.' The welfare, care and attention your staff provide for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are first class. All the parents I spoke with, rightly, agree that their children thrive and achieve exceptionally well throughout the school. Many families join the school at different times and pupils soon settle into school, making friends and enjoying their education. Most parents agree that your school is, as one told me and reflecting the views of most: 'A great school. My children learn very well and are happy in school.'

Leaders are successful in forging effective partnerships to share best practice through the 'Talk for Writing' schools' network and the partner school in the Inspire Education Community Trust. You have worked together with the talented senior

leadership team to make Yew Tree a school that takes a lead in developing teachers and support staff to become highly effective practitioners. Yew Tree has become a leading school that supports and influences the work of other schools across the local authority and works closely with the Birmingham Education Partnership.

The trust, governors and leaders have recruited and overseen staff development very well with the result that the teaching is effective in helping pupils to achieve exceptionally well. National test results, teachers' accurate assessments and pupils' work show that, in relation to their starting points, pupils in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 make great progress in English and mathematics. Pupils' independent writing improves very well as they progress from the early years through to Year 6. Pupils reach high standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 and the teaching of mathematics remains a significant strength across the school. Pupils make good progress in reading, although there is still scope now to do even better. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils in writing and mathematics, but like other pupils, they could also do better in reading.

There are many barriers and circumstances that affect pupils' learning when they join the school. Many join at different times and start school speaking little or no English. A large proportion of pupils across the school are disadvantaged. Despite these barriers, pupils of all ages and abilities soon settle into school and make significant progress learning to converse in English and read and write with increasing confidence and fluency. The teaching of phonics is highly effective. This is reflected in the consistently good proportion of pupils in key stage 1 that reach the required standard. This represents outstanding progress in relation to pupils' low starting points when first joining the school.

You and the staff continue to improve teaching in the early years. The staff provide many opportunities for Nursery and Reception children to explore and make choices in stimulating indoor and outdoor activities. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is increasing and is in line with national figures. In relation to the children's low starting points this represents strong progress, particularly in the development of their language and communication skills.

There have been improvements to the teaching of reading since the previous inspection. This has resulted in increasingly more pupils reaching or exceeding age-related standards by the end of each key stage. This represents good progress in relation to pupils' starting points. However, national assessment results over time typically show that pupils do not make as much progress in reading as they do in writing and mathematics. You have, rightly, made this a core priority for improvement and this is reflected in your leaders' accurate assessments, as set out in the school's action plans. The best practice is increasingly being shared with less-experienced teachers and support staff. For example, the most effective teachers enable pupils to read aloud with expression by pointing out key vocabulary and punctuation in the texts. Pupils in these lessons were observed discussing what they were reading. Teachers provide some excellent opportunities for pupils to explain their thoughts about the meaning of words and phrases. In Year 4, the teacher incorporated a wonderful role-play exercise to help pupils understand the subtleties

of the text being read. By 'phoning a friend' the interaction between 'speaker' and 'listener' was played out very well so that all pupils in the class could identify key features of the text to read with expression. These strong features of teaching reading are not yet common practice in all classes. There is scope to plan more-effective opportunities for pupils to read and share ideas about different texts and vocabulary.

Improvements to the teaching of writing and mathematics in all parts of the school are helping pupils to achieve exceptionally well. I could see very clearly when observing lessons, looking at pupils' work in books and talking to pupils, that they thrive on the many opportunities they have to draft and edit their writing. As I shared my thoughts with the executive leader when moving from the early years through key stage 1 and key stage 2 classes, the form and structure of pupils' writing improves very well. Workbooks show that pupils have many opportunities to correct spellings and check their work. Very good use is made of traditional and modern stories to help pupils develop accurate and well-formed independent and extended writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff vetting is rigorous. Procedures for checking the identity of staff, visitors, governors and supply staff are effective. The indoor and outdoor areas, including early years areas, are clean, safe and secure. Risk assessments of resources and any on-site and off-site activities are carried out routinely and effectively. Safeguarding and child-protection training for all staff is carried out systematically so that the staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection and the safety of pupils. All parents that I spoke with and all nearly all who responded to surveys and commented by text, rightly, believe that their children are safe and happy in school. Leaders and staff are fully trained in the national Prevent strategy. They keep up to date with the strategy to ensure that any concerns about the risks associated with radicalisation are recorded and notified to the appropriate authorities.

### **Inspection findings**

- Teachers make very good use of 'working walls', dictionaries and word banks to support pupils' learning. Visual prompts on displays in classrooms help pupils find information and key words when writing independently. Stimulating experiences in art, history and special topics enable pupils to write to a high standard in key stage 2. Good examples are stories and extracts of writing about 'ghostly apparitions' in history after visiting nearby Aston Hall. Good-quality writing about life during the Anglo-Saxon period broadens pupils' vocabulary, helping them to write interesting facts about different periods of European history.
- Pupils' independent writing by the end of key stage 2 is well-formed, lively and imaginative. As pupils move through each key stage, their writing becomes increasingly mature and complex. Children in the early years watch chicks hatch in the outdoor area and write about the life cycle of plants and animals. Pupils in

Year 2 visit a local park and write about their field work in geography. In Year 3, pupils record notable facts about a recent visit to a Sikh gurdwara as part of their religious education. Pupils in Year 6 could recite from extracts they had written about Shakespeare's Macbeth. All of these and many more examples on displays and in workbooks reflect strong progress in writing.

- Pupils' work and assessments show that they achieve exceptionally well in mathematics lessons. Pupils in key stage 2 demonstrated very good understanding of key number facts and concepts about fractions, decimals, ratios and percentages. Pupils apply efficient methods of calculation and use practical resources very well to help them solve problems. Pupils reach high standards in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Expert teaching and skilful use of interventions to support disadvantaged pupils enable these pupils to achieve as well as others. Additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is used well to deploy additional teachers with specific expertise in English and mathematics. This is proving to be effective because additional staff enable staff to teach smaller groups and focus on the individual learning needs of every pupil, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils with SEND, including those with cognitive learning difficulties or autism, do very well. The pupils are treated with care, dignity and respect. Skilful support ensures that teachers and support staff provide the right level of work and interventions for these pupils.
- The very good start made in phonics and early reading in the early years and key stage 1 is built upon in key stage 2. This represents significant improvements since the previous inspection. Phonics is very well taught in Year 1, providing solid foundations for pupils' early reading development. Many leaders and staff have developed expertise in teaching reading and these skills are increasingly being shared to support less experienced or new teachers and support staff. The current focus on improving still further the progress that pupils make in reading is the right one. As seen in writing and mathematics, there is potential now for even more pupils in each key stage to reach or exceed the age-related standards in reading and for the most able pupils to learn to read in greater depth.
- The school provides strong pastoral care and welfare for pupils. Pupils enjoy school very much, and this is reflected in good, punctual attendance. Persistent absenteeism has reduced due to the effective work that the school's family support worker and welfare officer do to keep in touch with families and ensure that pupils are safe when not in school.
- The partnerships with other schools help staff to see and share best practice. The school has maintained a stimulating and broad curriculum that includes the creative and performing arts, sport, music, dance, role play and drama. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to study history, geography and religious education. British values are taught very well using a curriculum template called 'The wheel of well-being'. Pupils learn to appreciate and experience a range of world cultures, faiths and customs. These experiences are reflected in the many high-quality displays of pupils' work in classrooms, corridors and open areas of the school.

- There is highly effective governance with clear lines of accountability. Through the trust's scheme of delegation governors and trustees manage the performance of senior leaders and staff very well. Governors challenge you and the staff to account for pupils' outcomes and the school's overall performance. Another significant improvement since the previous inspection has been the leadership of subjects and the role of middle leaders across the school. Their action plans are informed very well by accurate assessments and evaluations of teaching. As executive headteacher, you are creating and developing future leaders in a climate of high expectations and the continuing professional development of all staff.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improving pupils' achievement in reading by:
  - building on the strong practice that exists to provide more opportunities for pupils to read aloud and discuss what they are reading
  - planning more opportunities for pupils to retrieve information from a range of texts and broaden their use of vocabulary so they read with full understanding
  - taking more account of the punctuation in texts when pupils read to help them read with accuracy and expression.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing board, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer 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

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the head of school and executive teaching and learning leader throughout the inspection. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the local governing board. The executive teaching and learning leader and I visited most classes and we spoke to pupils, as well as observing their writing in books and on displays. I spoke to some parents at the start of the day and considered the responses to the school's recent surveys, as well as the small number of free-text responses sent to Ofsted's regional office. I also considered the 20 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the 45 responses from pupils. I scrutinised the school's improvement plan and leaders' evaluations of the school's work, as well as some minutes of governing body meetings and headteacher's reports to governors. I analysed national and school assessment information to consider

pupils' attainment and progress. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures with the school's office manager. I also met with you and the staff responsible for managing safeguarding procedures to discuss the school's procedures and arrangements for safeguarding pupils.