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Mr Philip Reid
Head of School
Ormiston Cliff Park Infant Academy
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Dear Mr Reid

Short inspection of Ormiston Cliff Park Infant Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, you have overseen a decline in standards for the past two years. A significant number of pupils did not make enough progress in reading and mathematics. There has also been a fall in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in the early years and a sharp decline in the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check. You have identified that the decline in standards was mainly due to expectations for learning not being high enough and inconsistencies in learning across year groups.

Leaders have partially addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have provided training for teachers in the use of phonics for writing and this has led to more opportunities for pupils to use phonics for writing in lessons. Teachers are beginning to provide more challenge to pupils' learning, including those with higher prior attainment. However, the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement have declined rather than improved.

The school moved to a different multi-academy trust in December 2018 to ensure increased capacity and opportunity for improvement in good-quality teaching and standards. The move to a new trust is already having a positive impact in improving teaching and learning.

You are developing strong teamwork among staff, who are also committed to continuous improvement. Staff are proud to work in the school and morale is improving. The school is beginning to show the capacity to further improve.

Parents are very pleased with the work of the school. One parent typically wrote, 'My children are very happy and enjoy their time in school. I can't praise the staff enough and I would certainly recommend this school to other parents.' You are working determinedly to improve the progress pupils are making across the school. Teamwork is strong and staff share the same drive and commitment for improving the school. They have established strong links with other schools in the multi-academy trust in order to share good practice for the benefit of pupils. Leaders have revised the curriculum and are ensuring that it is promoting pupils' personal development, including their awareness and understanding of fundamental British values. Attendance is improving and pupils' behaviour in lessons and across the school is good.

Since the beginning of this term, the new governing body and academy trustees are holding the school to account for its work. Governors have ensured that the website and required policies are up to date and implemented. They also attend school functions and are engaging with parents effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, governors and trustees are ensuring that all policies and procedures for promoting the safety and well-being of pupils are fit for purpose. The school works closely with parents and external agencies in developing a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that rigorous checks are made on all staff and visitors who work in the school and these are recorded accurately on the single central register. All training in safeguarding and child protection is up to date. Staff maintain high levels of supervision of pupils throughout the day and, as a result, pupils say they feel safe in school. Their parents and all staff agree that pupils are safe at school and they have no concerns about bullying. They believe that any rare incident of bullying would be dealt with effectively. Pupils know how to stay safe, including how to use computers and other devices safely, and they move around the school sensibly and with consideration for others.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to check if the current pupils in Year 1, including pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, were making good progress in reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This was because there was a sharp decline in the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in 2018. The school's records of progress show that the majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress this year in phonics.
- Pupils' progress in phonics is improving because staff have benefited from effective training in using phonics for writing and are working with the literacy leader to develop challenge in communication, language and literacy.

- Pupils' work shows that they are using phonics to spell words in their writing. My observations of phonics teaching and learning during this inspection showed that pupils in Year 1 are making better progress in using their phonics knowledge and skills to read and spell words.
- I wanted to find out if pupils in key stage 1 were making good progress, especially in reading and mathematics and in a wide range of other subjects. This was because the school's published data shows decline in standards in reading and mathematics during the past two years, and there is no published data on attainment in subjects other than reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Work in pupils' books, including reading records and the school's information about pupils' progress in reading and mathematics at key stage 1, is showing that they are making better progress in reading and mathematics.
- I also found that pupils were enjoying the wide range of subjects they study in topic work and the additional activities they take part in such as 'around the world day', and various clubs, including the gardening club, the dance club and the gymnastics club. However, there are few systems in place for subject leaders to check the quality of teaching and to show the progress pupils are making over time in any of these subjects.
- Teachers display the main technical vocabulary relating to different subjects in classrooms. However, in discussion with pupils about their learning, a significant number of pupils could not remember what the words mean. There were limited opportunities for pupils to practise and recall the fundamental knowledge and skills they had previously learned to deepen their understanding. The school has also recently introduced new policies to promote reading and writing, although these have not been fully implemented across the three classes in each year group.
- Finally, I wanted to determine how well governors and trustees were holding the school to account for the fall in standards and the dip in pupils' attendance over the past two years.
- I found that the new governors and academy trustees were beginning to challenge leaders about the impact of the school's work on improving the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. The head of school and principal are providing regular reports to the school's strategic progress board meeting on the impact of their work in improving teaching, the curriculum and outcomes for pupils.
- The trust's new executive principal is also monitoring and reviewing the work of the school on behalf of the regional director through regular first-hand visits. As a result, trustees have an accurate view of the school. They know how well attendance is improving and have checked the effectiveness of the school's work with parents to reduce the number of pupils who are frequent non-attenders. They are looking closely at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to address any shortcomings and put in place effective strategies, especially through links with the other schools in the trust to support staff and develop good practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders check that the agreed policies and practices in reading, writing and mathematics are implemented in order to raise pupils' achievement across the school, including in the early years
- leaders at all levels develop methods to determine the progress that pupils are making across a wide range of subjects
- pupils develop a clear understanding of technical vocabulary across a wide range of subjects and are given regular opportunities to practise their skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you, academy leaders, including the principal, the executive principal and regional director of the academy trust, and the chair of the governing body. I carried out joint visits to lessons with you and the principal, across the school and looked at samples of pupils' work. I talked to a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. I looked at the 33 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 31 free-text responses and nine staff responses. I also looked at a small number of email messages sent by parents. I examined a range of documentation, including: the academy's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan; the schools information about the progress pupils are making; records of behaviour and attendance figures; safeguarding policies and procedures; records of visits by trustees and governors; and minutes of governing body meetings.