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Mr Simon Smith
Principal
East Whitby Primary Academy
Stainsacre Lane
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of East Whitby Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 4 June 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 under your leadership in December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When they decided to convert to academy status in 2016, governors were determined that the school would retain its duty and commitment to serve local families. Leaders are fiercely loyal, proud and passionate advocates for their community. One parent said, 'There is a real community spirit within school which one doesn't always see in other schools.'

The government identified this region as an 'opportunity area' for improving social mobility. There is limited, or seasonal employment in this coastal town and some pupils are living in poverty. Leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of this additional challenge, but they do not use this as an excuse to set low expectations or accept underachievement. In fact, leaders are incredibly ambitious for their pupils, striving to remove every additional barrier to progress that lies in some pupils' way.

The impact of this relentless drive is reflected in Year 6 pupils' results, which have continued to improve under your leadership. Less than half of pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017, rising to more than three quarters of pupils achieving this in 2018. Year 6 pupils' combined results improved by 32% last year, moving from well below to well above the standard achieved by pupils of a similar age nationally.

Parents and carers value the balance you have achieved between driving standards forward but making sure that pupils feel cared for and without pressure. One parent

said, 'I love that every morning the principal stands at the top of the drive and greets every single child by name and gives them a smile. In return, they greet him and smile back. I think this sets the kids off well for the rest of the day.'

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were challenged to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills at key stage 1 so that more Year 2 pupils could meet the expected standard in reading. You have successfully achieved this and, as a result of good teaching, 90% of Year 2 pupils reached the expected standard in reading in 2018.

Children's reading results in Reception have remained below the national standard in recent years. The proportion of pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics check is improving, but has also remained below the national standard since 2015. Consequently, we worked together during this inspection to evaluate the quality of the teaching of early reading in Reception and Year 1.

In the previous inspection, leaders were also asked to improve the quality of their school improvement planning, and to ensure that the most able pupils were being given sufficient challenge across the wider curriculum. My other focus in this inspection was evaluating the progress that leaders have made in addressing these areas for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have made appropriate arrangements to cover the deputy designated safeguarding leader's responsibilities during the postholder's maternity absence.
- This inclusive school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have invested in first aid training for 20 staff to ensure that these pupils are kept safe. Leaders are working closely with the local authority to ensure that these pupils' additional needs are being met.
- Pupils' frequent absence rates are high. However, disabled pupils are sometimes forced to miss school through unavoidable hospital admission linked to serious illnesses or seizures, or essential hospital appointments to manage their chronic conditions.
- Leaders have taken effective steps to improve attendance rates for those pupils whose absences are avoidable. Leaders are well trained, and they understand the potential risks to absent pupils of criminal exploitation. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe even when they are absent. Leaders also share information with the secondary school when they identify signs that ex-pupils may be at risk through county lines.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have successfully addressed the weaknesses that were identified in their school improvement planning at the last inspection. They now set a manageable

number of key priorities. Leaders know the areas where the school needs to improve further, so the priorities they have identified are the right ones.

- Leaders have written detailed financial plans that support delivery of each of these objectives. Governors hold leaders to account at frequent intervals against sharp targets and milestones. As a result, leaders have made rapid progress towards achieving these school improvement priorities.
- Leaders identified that a large proportion of children have speech and language difficulties when they start school. Leaders arranged for teaching assistants to have specialist training so that they can give children in Reception the extra help they need. Since September, teaching assistants have delivered speech and language interventions to help children learn to hear and say new sounds and words. This is helping children to catch up quickly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have good phonics subject knowledge and they use language precisely. Early readers are confidently learning letters and sounds because of expert, systematic phonics teaching.
- Pupils' reading books are well matched to their phonics knowledge. This is helping to build pupils' confidence and fluency. I also tested less-able pupils using oral blending assessments and they were able to use their secure knowledge of phonics to segment and blend. All Year 1 pupils are quickly becoming speedy readers.
- Middle leaders are successfully increasing the level of challenge for pupils across the wider curriculum. Teachers say that they value the professional development opportunities they have been given to help them achieve this. Leaders have given careful thought to ensuring that pupils' knowledge and skills are built incrementally year-on-year.
- Some subjects are further forward in this strategic planning cycle than others, but there is clear evidence in subjects like history that this new curriculum is beginning to have an impact on accelerating pupils' achievement.
- Your quite remarkable, extensive knowledge of high-quality children's literature, including picture books, has completely inspired your staff to use books as a stimulus across the whole curriculum wherever possible. This really engages pupils' interest, increases their love of reading and challenges the most able pupils. Key stage 2 pupils produce high-quality writing in all subjects as a result.
- For example, Year 5 pupils read 'The Viewer' and 'The Jamie Drake Equation' as part of the stimulus for their scientific enquiry. One typical Year 5 pupil wrote a persuasive argument about the greatest scientific discovery that began: 'Copernicus' theory of the solar system, Albert Einstein's discovery of the speed of light and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution will be discussed. Upon evaluating the strengths of each discovery, an argument for the most significant will be presented.' This is typical of the high quality of writing that key stage 2 pupils produce across the wider curriculum.
- In contrast, the standard of written work produced by the most able children in Reception, and all pupils in key stage 1, is not good enough. Leaders were right to prioritise the needs of less-able Reception children in the first instance.

However, leaders have already identified that the level of challenge for the most able children in Reception, and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, is their next priority for school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to raise teachers' expectations of the most able children in Reception, and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, to ensure that a greater proportion of them achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.

I am copying this letter to the 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 North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed lessons together in Reception, key stage 1, Year 5 and Year 6. Pupils' work in all year groups and in all subjects was scrutinised alongside senior leaders. Meetings were held with you, the history and geography subject leader, the finance officer and a group representing the board of trustees. That group included the chair of the academy improvement committee, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust and the trust's director of improvement and performance.

Various documents were evaluated, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, strategic curriculum planning documents, governors' meeting minutes and the school's monitoring records. I also listened to several pupils read and spoke to pupils at breakfast club and during breaktime. Safeguarding documents were reviewed and discussed.

There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from staff or pupils, but leaders provided the school's internal staff survey from November 2018. The 30 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered, along with comments made personally to me by several parents taking their children to school at the start of the day.