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Mr Richard Woollacott
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Woollacott

Short inspection of Harpfield Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 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.

The school is a well-led and stimulating place in which to work and learn, and has continued to improve since the last inspection. Academic standards at the end of key stage 2 are high due to good quality teaching. Pupils make strong progress as they move through the school. Attendance rates have increased. Staff have high expectations of all pupils, both academically and for their behaviour. Pupils respond well to staff. Staff set challenging targets for pupils and make sure these are monitored and reviewed. Morale is high, and staff say they are proud to work at the school.

Governors, the academy council and the head office education team of Harpfield Primary Academy have high expectations for pupils. They use their expertise to good effect and have a positive impact on school improvement. They support and challenge leaders by asking pertinent questions about teaching and learning. Furthermore, governors and leaders' commitment to the well-being of staff and pupils has helped create a positive workplace for all.

Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke to me during the inspection expressed positive views about the school. They say their children are safe, happy and well looked after. One comment

summed up the views of many: 'There is a personal feel about the school and the headteacher knows all the children well and creates a good sense of community.'

You have acted upon the recommendations made at the previous inspection, which were about improving achievement and the quality of teaching. Teaching in all classes is effective and the curriculum is full of interesting subjects and activities. Staff are given opportunities to share and learn from other staff within the trust.

Most children enter the school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. They make good progress throughout the Nursery and Reception classes. Nevertheless, the outdoor environment could be developed to improve opportunities for learning. In addition, the proportions of pupils attaining at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 remain below national averages. This is why identifying pupils to achieve at greater depth is an important next step for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors, the academy council and the head office education team work closely with designated leaders for safeguarding and fulfil their responsibilities. You ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and clear about policies and procedures. Your record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is thorough. Staff follow up unexplained absences promptly and leaders analyse attendance to check for any patterns. Staff log concerns about pupils carefully and in appropriate detail. You follow up concerns in a timely manner and escalate them further when necessary. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to tell an adult if they have a worry. Pupils know that if they have a problem it will be sorted out. Through the curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn about e-safety, fire drills and lock-down procedures.

Inspection findings

- Children's starting points on entry to school vary, but many start with a level of knowledge and skills well below that typical for their age. Good communication with parents helps the early years team to make informed assessments about what the children know, and staff use this information to plan interesting lessons that meet their needs. Leadership of the early years is strong. Within classrooms role-play areas reflect children's areas of interests and allow them to develop communication skills. The outdoor area, however, provides too few opportunities for children to select and pursue their own interests. Children in the Reception Year do not have access to a covered area, and the space available for children outside is limited. As a result, children cannot move between activities inside and outside the classroom. When children leave the early years and move through key stage 1, they make good progress. However, teaching does not stretch and challenge the most able in order to help them attain at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

- The school is successful in promoting good attendance, and attendance rates have improved year on year over the last three years. Staff follow trust and local authority procedures to ensure that any incidents of persistent absence are followed up quickly. The number of exclusions has reduced. There have been no exclusions this academic year.
- The school's wider curriculum provides pupils with a range of experiences and opportunities that are rooted within a strong literacy focus. For example, in Year 2 pupils made 'dream jars and marvellous medicines' after studying texts by Roald Dahl. In Year 6 a focus on texts by JK Rowling, supported by a visit to the Harry Potter studios, resulted in pupils making props for a film in their design and technology lessons. Pupils have the opportunity to undertake local projects, such as 'Our Town' where pupils studied 'The Potteries' and the history of Josiah Wedgwood.
- The teaching of religious education is strong throughout the school. Pupils were able to retell Biblical stories such as 'The Lost Sheep' and explain the key points of Muslim prayer. The school has a rich cultural diversity and pupils are encouraged to celebrate and understand differences in their community. Pupils have access to specialist music teaching and visits by theatre companies. As a result, the school excels at music and drama. In all subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the progression of knowledge and skills to be taught across the school. This well-organised approach to curriculum design is the result of effective subject leadership that has grown and developed in recent times.
- In addition to their lessons, pupils can participate in numerous activities that help them develop valuable life lessons and raise aspirations. For example, pupils can take part in a cross-country running club and 'take the stage' classes, and can visit Oxford University and take part in a lecture there.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff develop the early years outdoor learning environment so that pupils have access to high-quality resources and provision
- the curriculum stretches and challenges the most able pupils at key stage 1 so that an increased proportion of pupils achieve a greater depth of learning by the end of the key stage.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy council, 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 Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team, and the school's business manager. I also met with the chair of the academy council and the director of standards and primary education from the trust. I carried out a joint learning walk with leaders throughout the school and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I met with a small group of pupils to talk about school life and work. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day.

I paid attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included the impact of leadership on teaching and learning, attendance and exclusion rates, safeguarding and the curriculum. By the end of the inspection I had taken account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 responses made using the free-text service. I considered 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I looked at several documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, minutes of the academy council's meetings and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.