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6 October 2017

Mrs Karin Nicholls
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Nicholls

Short inspection of Hogsthorpe Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You promote a caring culture where every pupil is highly valued and known well by you and your staff. Pupils are happy in school and parents are very supportive. Parents speak highly of the care and quality of education their children receive. For example, one parent stated, 'My son now loves going to school and is learning well. I would strongly recommend any parent to send their children to this friendly, caring village school.'

Staff have created a positive climate for learning in this very small school. As a result, pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They are respectful and behave well as a result of good relationships with their teachers and other staff. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They particularly enjoy learning through topics that motivate them and inspire their imagination. For example, Reception class children excitedly told me about their topic of 'space' where they were creating their own passports to travel into space. One child enthused, 'I'm going to use my passport to fly in a rocket to the moon!'

Hogsthorpe Primary Academy is a warm, friendly school where staff work closely together. They teach pupils to understand the importance of respecting others and valuing diversity. As a result, pupils are thoughtful, reflective and communicate well. One Year 2 pupil told me that 'Hogsthorpe Academy is a place where everyone is welcome. People are kind to me, so I'm kind to them.'

Academy leaders have worked with the trust improvement officer for the David Ross Education Trust to develop clear strategic plans for what is required to shape and drive the future of the school. Your self-evaluation accurately informs your policies, actions and staff training. For example, you recognised that the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics needed to improve. It was clear during this inspection that there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in this area. This has ensured that this year, a higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 attained the expected standard or better in mathematics.

The governing body provides leaders with effective support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable and regularly check the actions taken by leaders to secure improvements. They fulfil their strategic role effectively. Governors have a particular focus on pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and on disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that funding for these pupils is used effectively.

You have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement that the inspector identified at the last inspection. Teachers plan appropriate work that matches the abilities of pupils well. When looking in pupils' books I could see that pupils now have clear guidance about the steps they need to take in their learning. They are clear about the opportunities they have to access challenges when they can. One pupil remarked to me that she enjoys learning from her mistakes, explaining that 'The teachers encourage us to never give up, to keep on trying and take on challenging work.'

You acted promptly to improve the quality of leadership and management by enabling teachers to access training, coaching and mentoring to fulfil middle leadership roles. As a result, middle leadership is strong and focused on continuing improvements.

You have ensured that homework for all pupils is varied, creative and effectively consolidates learning that takes place in the classroom.

Safeguarding is effective.

Academy leaders have ensured that there is a good culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff and governors keep up to date with training. They know what to do to keep pupils safe. You work actively with external agencies and refer concerns in a timely manner. You and your staff are vigilant and are prepared to take decisive and prompt action, when needed, to secure pupils' well-being.

Pupils are safe and happy in school. They say that poor behaviour is rare but, when it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and fairly. Pupils feel well cared for by staff in school. They are taught about potential risks and how to stay safe in different situations. These include how to use the internet safely, safety when near water and dangers from strangers.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, you have made effective changes to the school building, provision and staff. The David Ross Education Trust has supported the school in funding an extension which has led to improved provision for the Reception and Year 1 classes.
- The majority of children enter the school with levels of ability that are lower than those expected for their age in most areas of learning. Nevertheless, good teaching means they catch up quickly. The teacher and teaching assistant work effectively together and place particular emphasis on developing children's communication skills. Provision is well planned to meet the needs of boys and girls in exciting and interactive ways. As a result, the majority of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- You and your staff were disappointed with the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 this year. You had previously identified that the performance of these pupils may be low. Quality-focused teaching and additional support are ensuring that these pupils are currently doing well.
- Pupils' skills in phonics are improving. Your English leader's focus on a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics has ensured that outcomes for pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved dramatically this year.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 improved and was above the national average. This was because you modified the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils and to raise standards. As a result, pupils across the school now get more opportunities to read good-quality texts and write in depth. They also get regular opportunities to solve a variety of challenging mathematical problems. Nevertheless, you agree that pupils do not get regular enough opportunities to write at length in order to practise and further develop their writing skills.
- Leaders have taken successful steps to raise standards so that more of the most able pupils attain the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are aware that this has not been as successful for the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Attendance is below the national average overall. This is a small school and the number of pupils in groups with low attendance is small. You work well with families in your community to support pupils in attending school regularly. You have rewarded pupils for good attendance and taken action against parents who condone their child's absence from school. As a result, attendance has improved but is not yet in line with the national figure.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils across the academy have regular opportunities to write at length in order to further develop their writing skills

- disadvantaged pupils are equally well challenged to attain higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- rigorous actions to further improve attendance and reduce persistent absence are sustained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your mathematics leader. I had two telephone conversations, one with the trust improvement officer for the David Ross Education Trust and another with the English leader. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and I met with a group of pupils. I met with two members of the governing body.

We visited classrooms together and I looked at a range of pupils' work. We discussed the progress of different groups of pupils and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, information regarding procedures for safeguarding and monitoring behaviour, information on how the pupil premium is spent, analysis of attendance and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding and behaviour. I examined the academy's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and out on the playground and in the lunch hall. I checked the academy's single central register to ensure that it met current safeguarding regulations.