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15 March 2019

Ms Sarah Talbot
Principal
East Ardsley Primary Academy
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Dear Ms Talbot

Short inspection of East Ardsley Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, you have faced significant changes to your staff team. These changes have been managed well and teachers and other adults feel well supported and enjoy working at your school. You have established a sense of togetherness among staff and they enjoy good relationships with the pupils. You and your leadership team have developed 'The East Ardsley Approach', a document that provides guidance to staff. This is beginning to provide more consistency in the approaches that teachers use when teaching the pupils.

You have accurately identified what it is you need to do to make further improvements to the school and have plans in place to help you take the necessary next steps. You have begun to provide carefully thought out support for new leaders. Leaders who are new to their roles receive good support from more experienced colleagues and this helps them to carry out their roles effectively.

The school has a good relationship with the Leodis Multi-Academy Trust and you provide support for others in this group of schools. These connections allow ideas to be shared and this benefits staff and pupils in East Ardsley Primary Academy. Staff appreciate the opportunities they are given to learn from and share good practice with other local schools. Governors say that being part of the trust has allowed them to increase and sharpen the challenge they provide to leaders.

Pupils are polite and give a warm welcome to visitors. Their behaviour around the school is consistently good and they are helpful to one another. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that they feel safe in school. They have a mature view of bullying, saying that on rare occasions this can happen but know that if it does, it will be dealt with swiftly. Pupils appreciate the good levels of care they receive and know that, together, your staff are there to help them.

Following your previous inspection, inspectors recommended that you ensure that children in the Reception classes have frequent opportunities to practise their writing and counting skills. Early years teachers have reviewed the way they teach and now ensure that they plan activities throughout the day that allow children to practise these skills. Adults show children how to complete tasks and provide them with the resources they need to complete them successfully. Staff use practical ways to teach writing and these are used to reinforce their skills, for example when writing instructions to explain how to make bread.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Leaders make sure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors and visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Records of these checks, along with other arrangements relating to safeguarding, are detailed and of a good quality. Safeguarding training is delivered regularly to staff and governors, and staff know exactly what to do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare. You have effective systems in place that allow staff to share important information. Leaders work well in partnership with other agencies to ensure that any such concerns are dealt with promptly.

The curriculum you offer helps pupils to have a very good understanding of the different ways they can stay safe. Pupils speak with confidence about how they can stay safe online. They appreciate the visits they receive from professionals who talk to them about the different ways they can keep themselves safe from harm.

Leaders, ably supported by the family support worker, have worked hard to improve the attendance of pupils. You have thorough approaches to checking the rates of attendance, you provide rewards to pupils and have developed better links with parents and families. This has ensured that attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, has improved and is now above the national average.

Inspection findings

- The progress that pupils make across key stage 2 in writing has declined steadily over the past three years and is now further below the national average. The progress that high-prior-attaining pupils made in 2018 was slower than their peers and not enough of these pupils reached the higher standards. This meant that, overall, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in writing was below the national average. I wanted to find out what you are doing to improve pupils' achievement in writing.

- The 'East Ardsley Approach' provides teachers with clarity about how they should teach writing in school. There is a clear process in place that expects pupils to familiarise themselves with texts before writing their own. The English team work well together and have provided staff with support to teach writing in this way. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and have a clear understanding about what it is that needs to improve. Leaders have identified that many children enter the school with a limited vocabulary and this inhibits the writing they produce. Work has started to extend the vocabulary that the youngest children have. Examples of early writing show that these children are now beginning to use these words when they form sentences. Leaders intend to continue this work with classes across the school to further develop pupils' vocabulary.
- When we looked at pupils' written work, we found that the school's English plans allow pupils to effectively build upon learning from the previous year. We could see evidence of the East Ardsley writing approach in pupils' books, but this was inconsistently applied. In many classes, pupils do not get enough opportunities to use their own ideas to apply the skills they have learned. During your last inspection, inspectors reported that pupils were given sufficient time to edit and redraft their written work. On this inspection, I found little evidence in pupils' books to show that pupils reflect upon their writing and subsequently make improvements. This hinders the achievement of some pupils, particularly the most able pupils, who are capable of producing even better-quality pieces of writing and of reaching the higher standards.
- During your previous inspection, inspectors identified that you needed to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. They recommended you do this in a range of ways: providing practical activities; ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of calculations; ensuring that pupils learn their multiplication tables; providing opportunities to apply their mathematical skills; and considering ways of speeding up girls' progress in key stage 2. Over time, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been just below the national average. Similarly, in 2018, pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. I wanted to find out what you have done to improve pupils' outcomes this year.
- The leaders for mathematics have reviewed the way that mathematics is taught and have introduced a new calculation policy. This ensures that pupils build upon the strategies they have learned and are more fluent with their mathematical skills. Leaders have also put in place a new approach to the teaching of multiplication tables; pupils enjoy this approach and are challenged to recall these number facts in a variety of challenging ways. Teachers have received training to improve the way they teach mathematical concepts and there is now a much more consistent approach to the way pupils learn about number.
- There is now more evidence in pupils' books of pupils developing their problem-solving and reasoning skills. There is little difference between the quality of work in mathematics books of boys and girls. Checks of books show that the most able pupils are not challenged enough. Their progress is limited because they sometimes find work too easy. When we watched teaching and learning in classrooms together, we noticed that adults were not aware of how well pupils

were doing when not working with an adult. This meant that some pupils finished their work quickly and did not use their time effectively to learn more. Some other pupils, for example the low-prior-attaining pupils, were given tasks which were not planned well enough to meet their needs. They struggled to complete activities without a high level of adult support. Sometimes, these pupils were stuck but adults were unaware. This meant they could not complete their tasks effectively. As a result, not enough pupils, particularly the most able, are making good progress. During your previous inspection, inspectors identified that the quality of teaching needed to improve and that teachers should frequently question pupils to extend and challenge their learning. This remains an important area for improvement.

- In Year 6 in 2018, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was below that of their peers and other pupils nationally. Their progress in these subjects across key stage 2 was below that of other pupils in school and nationally. Therefore, I wanted to find out how effectively you use pupil premium funding to provide support for disadvantaged pupils. You have accurately identified that this is an area to improve.
- You have detailed plans in place that identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and allocate funding to provide good support. You have provided members of staff with training to help them to support these pupils and have thorough systems in place to check whether these pupils are making enough progress to catch up. Your plans are now more precise and you take care to identify the specific needs of each pupil and put in place support to help them to improve. You have taken steps to provide effective support for pupils' social and emotional needs and this has given them more self-confidence and a greater belief in their own abilities. The family support worker has begun to strengthen links with parents and families. Opportunities for parents and families to discuss ways of supporting their children are good.
- Although the attainment of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of other pupils in school and other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, many are making good progress. There is growing evidence that the gap in attainment is now narrowing between disadvantaged pupils and others. Even so, you agree that this remains an important area for you to further improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in writing at the end of key stage 2 increases so that it is at least in line with the national average
- teachers plan mathematical tasks that accurately meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able
- teachers and other adults respond more effectively to the changing needs of pupils within lessons

- plans for the use of pupil premium funding are reviewed closely to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress so that gaps in their attainment compared to others in the school and nationally narrow.

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 Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jaimie Holbrook
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and other senior leaders and explained my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, a representative from the academy trust, the subject leaders for English and mathematics and the designated safeguarding leader. There were 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 26 free-text comments. There were 25 responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and 64 for pupils. We visited classes together in key stage 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a group of pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets legal requirements on the publication of specified information.