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23 July 2019

Mrs Gemma Hooper
Head of School
Whitemoor Academy
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Dear Mrs Hooper

Short inspection of Whitemoor Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 May 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 areas identified for improvement during that inspection, especially pupils' achievement in writing, have been addressed well.

You, other leaders and the trust have been highly successful in improving the school over time. You have raised teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Improvements in teaching enable pupils to make strong progress across most subjects and year groups. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in writing has been in line with the top 20% of schools for at least two years. In 2018, their progress in reading improved to well above average and in the top 10% of schools.

Pupils' progress in mathematics has remained average for the past two years. It has not improved as strongly as in reading and writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. You have accurately identified progress in mathematics as an area for improvement and you are taking appropriate action to address this. You have also accurately identified weak language skills as a barrier to learning for some disadvantaged pupils. Nonetheless, given pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics overall, pupils are prepared well for secondary school.

Children get off to a good start in the early years foundation stage. Staff ensure they make strong progress in all areas of learning through skilfully adapting the activities to meet the children's needs. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has overtaken the national average and continues to rise. The teaching of phonics is particularly effective in the early years and in Year 1. A high

proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics national screening check in 2018.

The trust holds you robustly to account for pupils' achievement. It supports you very effectively in providing high-quality professional development for teachers and subject leaders. The impact is seen in the improvements in the teaching and learning of reading and writing. The trust has also helped you and the other leaders to create an inspiring, well-resourced environment for learning. This includes the outdoor area, which makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in science and their physical development.

The curriculum, together with the wide variety of sport and clubs on offer, promotes strongly pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, pupils in key stage 2 study different faiths and food from around the world. They learn to be responsible citizens, as when considering the planet and issues such as climate change and the disposal of plastics.

The positive and respectful relationships between pupils and staff help to nurture pupils' confidence and enjoyment of school. Pupils are eager to learn and to talk about their work. They behave well. While the large majority of parents would recommend the school to others, a small minority would not. The small number of parents' text responses included concerns about staffing in key stage 1. You are taking appropriate action to address this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the trustees have created a culture of vigilance with regard to keeping pupils safe. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Training in safeguarding and in preventing radicalisation and extremism ensures that staff are knowledgeable and confident to identify any pupils at risk and to report their concerns. You ensure the pupils are supported well and you make good use of external expertise when necessary. Arrangements, such as for safer recruitment, are managed effectively and records are organised very well.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They have confidence in the staff to deal with any issues of bullying effectively. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to stay safe, including when using technology or social media.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain whether the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was to check how successful leaders and managers are in improving pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics in line with their strong performance in reading and writing. In particular, I wanted to find out how well teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics was being developed.
- Leaders are taking appropriate action to develop the subject knowledge of teachers and teaching assistants, although it is not yet consistently strong across the school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEND), are increasing their fluency in number work and they are applying calculation more accurately in problem-solving. Pupils, particularly in the early years foundation stage and key stage 2, are challenged to explain their reasoning through probing questions, such as 'can you convince me...?'. However, some disadvantaged pupils struggle to comprehend the mathematical vocabulary. Suitable strategies are being employed to help them in this and in recording their reasoning.

- My second line of enquiry was to check how well leaders and managers are improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, especially in mathematics and at greater depth across subjects in key stage 2. I wanted to find out if pupils' barriers to learning, particularly their limited language skills, are being addressed effectively in lessons throughout the school. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils made strong progress in the early years foundation stage and in key stage 1. In key stage 2, their progress was in line with the lowest 20% of schools in mathematics, although average in reading and writing. None of these pupils achieved at greater depth in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Effective phonics teaching in the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 makes a positive impact on developing disadvantaged pupils' vocabulary and sentence structure. However, pupils' strong progress in reading is not sustained to the end of key stage 1 because the pupils are not reading regularly, including for homework. Similarly, the pupils' vocabulary and sentence structure are not developed sequentially throughout the year groups. In key stage 2, increased emphasis on developing subject vocabulary and help in starting sentences are beginning to improve the pupils' skills in recording their mathematical reasoning. By the end of the key stage, the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged to work at greater depth across all subjects. For example, they organise their writing highly effectively into well punctuated, complex sentences, using interesting vocabulary. This level of challenge is not yet consistent across all year groups.
- My third line of enquiry related to the effectiveness of your strategies for addressing persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. This was because, in 2018, the rate of overall absence was slightly above the national average for schools with a similar level of deprivation. The highest rate of absence was for disadvantaged pupils. Persistent absence was slightly below the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils had a far higher rate of persistent absence than other pupils.
- You have worked successfully with parents to reduce the level of absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, attendance is now in line with the national average and persistent absence is below average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics improves in line with their strong progress in reading and writing by ensuring that teachers' knowledge of how to

develop pupils' mastery of the subject, and especially their reasoning, is consistently strong throughout the school

- the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is consistently strong across all year groups and subjects by:
 - developing their vocabulary and sentence structure sequentially throughout the school, including when recording their reasoning in mathematics
 - inspiring the pupils to read more and developing their comprehension of texts and questions across subjects
 - ensuring the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged consistently across the year groups to work at greater depth.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Aspire Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, subject and other middle leaders, a few of the hub councillors, and a small group of parents. I spoke informally to staff and pupils around the school. You and I examined a sample of pupils' work in their books. The sample included the work of pupils who are most-able, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. We also observed the pupils learning in each class. In addition, I listened to a small group of pupils reading. I examined a range of school documents, including your self-evaluation, improvement planning and documents relating to pupils' progress, attendance and safety. I took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and the small number of written responses from parents. I also considered the 12 responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupils' survey.