

13 May 2019

Mr James Grayston
Acting Headteacher
Sharlston Community School
Hammer Lane
Sharlston Common
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Dear Mr Grayston

Short inspection of Sharlston Community School

Following my visit to the school on 30 April 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

Since taking on your interim role of acting headteacher, you have worked successfully with other school leaders, staff and support from the Waterton Academy Trust to ensure the school's improvement. School leaders, governors and the trust's chief executive officer (CEO) have a secure understanding of the strengths and priorities for developing the school. As a team, you have recently acted to successfully improve the quality of teaching of reading, strengthen safeguarding arrangements and improve overall pupils' attendance levels. At the same time, you have sustained many of the strengths in relation to pupils' behaviour and personal development found at the previous inspection of your predecessor school. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The strengths in pupils' behaviour found at the inspection of your predecessor school have been maintained. You and your staff regularly consider how this aspect of the school can be improved further and you have recently developed your behaviour policy. Pupils move around school in an orderly fashion and demonstrate good manners. In lessons, pupils participate attentively in learning and cooperate well with their peers. Their behaviour at playtimes is good, and they engage well in the range of active and social activities available. The school's behaviour system is well understood by pupils, and classroom displays show that teachers make consistent use of this approach. Leaders' and staff efforts to improve overall levels of pupils' attendance is beginning to bear fruit. However, there is more to do to bring attendance levels up so that they at least match the national averages for schools in similar contexts.

The areas for improvement identified at the inspection of your predecessor school have been addressed, or are moving in the right direction. Leaders and staff have introduced new approaches to ensure that all groups of pupils are challenged. They are then moved on to harder work, so they make rapid gains in their learning during mathematics lessons. Your current focus on embedding pupils' arithmetic knowledge, to ensure that they can recall this learning rapidly, is having a positive effect. However, sometimes less able pupils do not have enough time or the necessary support to embed their learning. Leaders have identified that there is a need to refine these recently introduced approaches further. Your focus on improving pupils' mathematics attainment has led to improvements. For example, in 2018, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was similar to that found nationally.

A second area to address was to ensure that all activities in the Nursery class are sufficiently challenging and have a clear learning purpose, particularly to support early number and reading development. At the time of the inspection, the substantive Nursery teacher was not in school. However, your early years leader could clearly explain steps that have been taken to improve the consistency of planning for children's learning across Nursery and Reception. Our visits to classrooms and outdoor learning areas identified that there is variability in the quality of children's learning opportunities in the indoor and outdoor provision. Across early years, the opportunities and challenge to develop children's reading, writing and mathematics are stronger in classrooms than outdoors.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, staff and governors identify keeping pupils safe as a high priority, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recent improvements to the building have tightened site security. Leaders complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. Staff receive regular and appropriate training, so they know the school's procedures and how to keep pupils safe. Documentation is well maintained, and the school's online records enable effective organisation and analysis of safeguarding information. Both you and your learning mentor have a thorough understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders work with a determined approach with other agencies to secure support for pupils where needed.

Inspection findings

- Both you and the acting deputy headteacher have 'stepped up' well to the additional responsibilities of your interim roles. The trust provides effective leadership support where necessary. This has enabled the school to continue to improve. As a result, arrangements for safeguarding are stronger, the quality of the teaching of reading is improving and pupils' overall attendance levels are higher.

- There is a well-structured approach to phonics teaching across the school. Effective support is in place for any Year 2 pupils who have not achieved the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. This accelerates their learning and they can catch up quickly. However, there is more to do to bring the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check to, at least, match the national average. The trust has further training planned for staff, including those who are new to the school, to ensure that the phonics teaching is of a consistently high quality.
- Staff plan the development of pupils' early reading skills effectively in key stage 1. Reading books are well matched to pupils' abilities, including their phonics knowledge. Pupils enjoy reading and higher attaining pupils read with expression and understanding. As a result, in 2018, the proportion of Year 2 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading was similar to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth was slightly below the national average.
- In 2018, pupils' progress in reading by the end of Year 6 fell, and was significantly below that found nationally. Leaders and the trust have responded promptly to this priority for improvement. Teachers have received training in the teaching of reading, additional reading resources are available and regular timetabled reading sessions are now in place. This is showing a positive effect on key stage 2 pupils' knowledge of a range of vocabulary and understanding of texts. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to demonstrate a secure understanding of 'Macbeth', which they had recently studied. However, sometimes these reading sessions do not fully support less able pupils or deepen the learning for the most able pupils.
- Subject leaders for mathematics and English have a good understanding of the priorities for further improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility. They are taking appropriate actions and check regularly for improvement, providing prompt guidance for staff to assist with further improvements. The trust's school improvement officers have supported these leaders well. This has provided relevant leadership capacity and development to drive improvements rapidly.
- Leaders have recently introduced improvements to assessment and recording approaches for reading and mathematics. This is helping staff and leaders to identify where pupils' attainment needs to accelerate in order for pupils to be working at the standards required for their age. However, these approaches have not yet been implemented across the full academic year. There is further work to be completed to ensure that these are fully embedded.
- Leaders have introduced a new policy for attendance. Careful analysis of attendance patterns and support and challenge for pupils and their families by the school's pastoral team are having a positive effect. Overall pupil attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils, is improving. Leaders are determined to reduce persistent absence levels and further improve attendance so that this, at least, matches the average for schools in similar contexts.
- The leader for early years, who is currently acting deputy headteacher, has a good understanding of the areas for improvement in early years. She is clear

about how these relate to improving outcomes for children in early years and pupils starting key stage 1. She has taken effective action to develop early years assessments and to improve the quality of teaching. Her plans rightly identify the need to improve the quality of learning outdoors, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted free text survey were positive about the school. These parents highlighted the progress that their child was making, and the support received, where pupils have additional learning or emotional needs. However, some parents raised concerns about how effectively bullying was addressed, and the school's identification of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). During the inspection, the pupils I spoke to understood the forms bullying can take and, while they said that it can happen at your school, they are confident that staff will deal with this. A review of the school's online system for recording incidents of bullying shows that leaders take incidents of bullying seriously and act, in a timely manner, to provide guidance and support for pupils involved. You have established experienced leadership of provision for pupils with SEND at the school, both for this term and for the following academic year. This, you believe, will secure appropriate leadership to ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are met.
- Governors and the trust's CEO make effective use of a range of approaches, including regular visits into the school, to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They provide an effective balance of challenge and support. Support by the trust, including that from a senior school improvement officer, has been well targeted to meet the school's improvement needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- developments in reading and phonics are embedded, by ensuring a sharper match between the texts used in key stage 2 reading sessions and pupils' abilities, and further strengthening the teaching of phonics
- recently introduced assessment and recording approaches are consistently applied across the school
- developments in the teaching of mathematics enable all pupils to practise and retain number knowledge
- early years outdoor provision improves, so that the reading, writing and mathematics learning opportunities match the quality of those in the indoor classrooms
- improvements to overall attendance levels and reduced persistent absence continue so that the school's attendance levels at least match the national averages found in similar schools.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the acting deputy headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and the learning mentor. The trust's school improvement officers joined the meetings with leaders for English and mathematics. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a meeting with two governors, a trust senior school improvement officer and the trust's CEO. I considered school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 22 parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. Along with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, I visited six classes to observe teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read within lessons and individually. I considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying.