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17 October 2018

Mrs Tracy Cockram
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cockram

Short inspection of Gipsey Bridge Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2018, 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 October 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 your promotion to headteacher in April 2016, you have led the school with determination and commitment. You have created a culture of a strong sense of purpose and high expectations for staff and pupils. Everyone works together as a team and staff morale is high. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to be a member of this small community.

You provide pupils with a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good and often exemplary. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their lessons and other learning outside classrooms. They listen respectfully to each other's views and to adults' instructions. Older pupils excitedly described to me how they are organising a spelling club for younger pupils in the school. Pupils throughout the school are well mannered, polite and considerate.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They particularly expressed positive views about the 'caring and helpful' staff. Parents also remarked on how eager their children are to come to school because learning is fun.

You have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's effectiveness. This includes the 2018 slight dip in progress for the pupils who have just left the school.

From a thorough examination of what has not worked well enough, you know what needs to improve. You have based your improvement actions on the most effective practice seen in other schools. Your school improvement plan sets out most of what needs to improve. It does not, however, highlight all the priority areas that you have identified to further improve pupils' progress.

Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Teachers plan learning activities that engage and motivate pupils. Pupils are keen and participate with interest. Teachers use effective resources to help structure pupils' learning. They use questioning effectively to check on pupils' understanding. Teachers are now also using questioning more skilfully to make pupils think harder.

You have established a comprehensive system to check on and record pupils' progress. Teachers have an accurate understanding of how pupils are progressing through the curriculum. The small number of pupils in each year group makes it statistically unreliable to compare pupils' attainment with national averages. Typically, pupils across the school, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress.

You share strong teaching expertise, both within and beyond the school, to help teachers improve their practice. You have taken effective action where practice has not met the high standards you set.

Academy trustees and governors are committed to providing pupils with a good-quality education. They provide you with effective support. Governors bring a range of skills and experience to their roles. They keep their skills up to date through frequent and pertinent training. Governors keep a careful check on pupils' progress. They make visits to the school to verify the information leaders share with them. Governors are not afraid to challenge leaders about the effectiveness of their work. The school's improvement plan, however, is less effective than it might be in supporting developments in the school.

You have maintained the strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection. In particular, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check remains above the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values continue to be strong.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of handwriting. You have introduced a new approach to the teaching of handwriting across the school. This has improved pupils' letter formation, legibility and fluency. Pupils take both care and pride in their handwriting.

You were also asked to improve pupils' mental recall and problem-solving skills in mathematics. Teachers now provide pupils with effective ways for them to master their mental recall. Teachers also provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their skills in problem solving.

Furthermore, you were asked to ensure that teachers settle pupils more quickly during changes in activities. Leaders and teachers have established effective routines to improve the transition between activities. During the inspection, when moving from one task to another, pupils were cooperative, calm and made efficient use of time.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to improve the school further. Despite the improvements made in mathematics, pupils' reasoning skills are not sufficiently well developed. In addition, the proportion of pupils who reach a greater depth in their learning is below average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have meticulously carried out all the necessary checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. You and the staff complete regular safeguarding training. Staff know well the action they need to take if they have a concern. Trustees and governors are suitably trained and attentive in their duty to keep pupils safe.

Staff are caring and know the pupils in this small school community well. Pupils unanimously told me that they feel safe in school. You have positive relationships with external agencies. Pupils, and their families, are provided with any extra support or care they may need. All the parents who responded to Parent View said that their children feel safe.

Inspection findings

- Typically, pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, in 2018, pupils' overall progress declined in this subject. Leaders have established that pupils' reasoning skills had not been sufficiently well developed. They considered the actions they needed to take to rectify this. Leaders have introduced a new mathematics teaching programme across the school. Teachers now provide pupils with more opportunities to discuss and explain their understanding. Pupils spoke positively about this new approach to their learning. Although the new approach is at an early stage of its implementation, pupils are already making good progress in this aspect of their learning in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. In 2017, however, pupils' spelling was not as strong as it had been in previous years. Leaders swiftly introduced a different approach to the teaching of spelling. In 2018, pupils' attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling improved. Pupils' books show that teachers have high expectations for pupils' accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling throughout the curriculum.
- Despite improvements in 2018, not enough pupils reach a greater depth in their learning. Teachers plan learning that matches the needs of most pupils. They do not, however, consistently challenge pupils with harder work. Leaders have taken some action to remedy this weakness. For example, they have restructured the

timetable. Pupils now have allocated time to practise more demanding skills. At times, however, teachers are still too slow in moving pupils on to more challenging tasks.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further modify the school's improvement plan to make it even more effective in supporting the school's development
- teachers embed the new mathematics programme, especially in improving pupils' reasoning skills
- teachers provide pupils with more demanding work more quickly in order to help to increase the proportion of pupils who reach a greater depth in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed leaders' self-evaluation of the school and shared my key lines of enquiry. I held meetings with you and the chair of the board of trustees. I observed jointly with you pupils' learning in all classes.

I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. I spoke with pupils informally and met formally with a group of pupils. I also listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 read and examined samples of pupils' work.

In addition, I considered a range of documents. These included the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress, attainment and behaviour. I considered the parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as pupils' and staff survey responses. I reviewed the school's safeguarding practices. The school's website was also checked to confirm whether it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.