

17 May 2019

Mr Michael Carr  
Headteacher  
Heworth Church of England Primary Academy  
53 Heworth Road  
York  
North Yorkshire  
YO31 0AA

Dear Mr Carr

### **Short inspection of Heworth Church of England Primary Academy**

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 March 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. You have raised the aspirations of adults and pupils and established a nurturing atmosphere. As a result, teachers have increasingly high expectations of pupils' achievement, and pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. Parents rate the school highly. One parent said, 'Staff go above and beyond to nurture individuals.' This is typical of the view of many parents.

Pupils are strongly engaged and interested in their lessons. They participate conscientiously, and often enthusiastically. Teachers aim increasingly high when planning what pupils will learn and pupils rise to these expectations. A broad, balanced and engaging curriculum, and a wide range of enrichment opportunities, contribute to pupils' attitudes to, and enjoyment of, school.

You and the staff have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Regardless of the improvements in attainment over the last few years, leaders are not complacent. They continue to build on past successes to improve pupils' progress further. For example, improvements in the teaching of reading have raised the standard of pupils' reading. An increased proportion of pupils exceed the expected standard in reading. Leaders are beginning to have success replicating this in writing and mathematics, subjects in which most pupils achieve the expected standards, but in which there is scope for more pupils to exceed these standards.

Over the last two years, the achievement of children in the early years has been a little weaker than achievement of children of a similar age nationally. You and the

early years leader are beginning to take effective action to improve children's outcomes, particularly in reading and writing. There remain weaknesses in the extent to which the activities children access independently contribute to their learning. This is because these activities do not challenge children consistently well or help them to apply their developing knowledge.

You ensure that the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through religious education (RE) and curriculum-themed weeks. As a result, pupils demonstrate tolerance, respect and open-minded attitudes to diversity. They generally have a well-developed knowledge of the cultures and faiths that they learn about, including those other than Christianity. However, they do not learn about some of the major world faiths, and their knowledge and understanding about gender diversity are limited. Therefore, there is scope to improve further pupils' preparedness for life in modern Britain.

The Pathfinder Trust has ensured, through professional support and challenge, that it has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Trustees and trust leaders hold school leaders to account well. Collaboration between schools in the trust has contributed to the development of middle leaders in the school, and consequently, raised the standards pupils attain.

Members of the local governing committee (LGC) bring the right sorts of skills and experience to their role. They are committed. They have an accurate view of the quality of education. The trust's scheme of delegation helps the LGC to focus on the most important improvement priorities. Consequently, governors hold you and other leaders to account effectively.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The record of safer recruitment checks on adults who are employed or volunteer at the school is complete and up to date. The school site is safe and secure.

Thorough child protection records show that staff report and record concerns they have about individual pupils. Staff have been trained in their fundamental duties, including the 'Prevent' duty. However, records of training are not detailed, making it difficult for those responsible, including governors and the trust, to keep a precise check on which staff have had full and comprehensive training.

Many parents commented on how caring and friendly the staff are. Pupils I asked all said that they had a trusted adult in school in whom they can confide. A very small minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying. However, pupils, who have a well-developed understanding of what bullying is, reported that bullying is rare and that adults deal with it effectively. Pupils' positive behaviour makes a strong contribution to pupils' safety. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including how to stay safe online.

The LGC prioritises safeguarding in its discussions. Along with the trust, governors check the safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

## **Inspection findings**

- Over time, the proportion of the most able pupils reaching higher than expected standards by the end of each key stage has been inconsistent. For example, in 2017 and in 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving above-average standards in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average. On the other hand, in reading, the figure was above the national average. Leaders are rightly aiming to help middle-prior-attaining pupils, who perhaps ought to have achieved higher standards earlier in their schooling, to make faster progress to reach a high standard by the time they leave the school.
- Teaching has improved over the last few years. Teachers set increasingly high standards for pupils to reach. Teachers ask pupils searching questions that prompt deep thinking. Pupils are expected to give full answers which they largely do with confidence. Teachers use information technology very effectively to inspire pupils. Teachers really promote the development of vocabulary which contributes well to pupils' progress in reading and writing. Teachers make effective use of resources to develop pupils' conceptual understanding in mathematics. As a result of this effective teaching, and teachers' raised expectations of what pupils ought to be able to achieve, increasing numbers of pupils are beginning to learn at greater depth and to achieve above-average standards.
- Pupils acquire knowledge in a range of subjects. They enjoy a wide variety of enjoyable enrichment activities. Art, computing, music and physical education are taught by teachers who specialise in these subjects. As a result, pupils acquire considerable knowledge and understanding in these areas of learning. However, not all subjects are planned and taught equally well in all year groups. For example, in subjects such as science, geography and RE, some work in some year groups makes superficial demands on pupils. In some classes there is more depth and challenge in the teaching of these subjects. Furthermore, the planning of some subjects does not help pupils to acquire knowledge cumulatively and progressively.
- Over the last two years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been a little below the national average. This is because the achievement of a few children in reading and writing has not matched their general language development and their personal, social and physical development. Furthermore, hardly any children have exceeded early learning goals. Leaders are taking steps to improve this. Signs of improvement are evident in the fact that this year a few pupils are managing to exceed writing goals. The direct teaching of groups of children is more effective than the activities children access independently. While these activities largely engage children, they do not generally challenge them well enough to apply their developing knowledge, understanding and skills.

- The school's core values are woven into the curriculum. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a recent themed week helped pupils to learn about life in Africa. A visitor has taught pupils about the Islamic faith and pupils have visited a mosque. Pupils demonstrate tolerance, respect and open-minded attitudes to difference. However, missing elements from the curriculum limit pupils' understanding in some areas. For example, pupils have not learned about some major world faiths represented in British society. Pupils do not learn enough about gender stereotyping and diversity. Such omissions risk undermining pupils' full preparation for life in modern Britain.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve higher standards and greater depth in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2
- play and exploration in the early years suitably challenge children
- the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at least reaches the national average and that a higher proportion of children exceed early learning goals
- they carry out plans to review the foundation curriculum, carefully considering the content to include, and the sequencing of that content, so that pupils acquire knowledge cumulatively in all subjects
- children are taught about a wider range of faiths and religions and about gender diversity.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together, you and I briefly observed teaching and learning in all classes. With the assistant headteacher we scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks. I held meetings with the chief executive officer and chair of the board of directors of the trust. I met with five members of the LGC, including the chair. I had a brief telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. I also had brief conversations with a number of staff members. I examined a range of documents, including the school self-evaluation document, assessment records, notes of visits from trust

representatives and external consultants, and notes of the checks that leaders make of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. I examined a range of safeguarding documents and records. I chatted with pupils informally, met with a group of pupils and considered 75 responses from pupils to the Ofsted survey. I scrutinised the 133 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 35 written responses from parents. I considered the responses of 21 members of staff to the Ofsted staff survey.