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Mrs Lucy Williams
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Williams

Short inspection of Fairway Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 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 January 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 school has been through a period of instability in recent years, with two changes of headteacher. Since your appointment in January 2018, you have provided clear strategic leadership and the school has improved considerably. In that short time, you have developed new leaders and provided clear vision and direction for the school. Staff appreciate your leadership and they form a hard-working and committed team. All staff who responded to their inspection questionnaire said that they are proud to work in the school, and almost all agreed that the school is well led.

Leaders now know the school well, including its strengths and those areas that need to improve further. Their plans to address remaining weaknesses are clear and well focused. For example, although teaching has improved over the last year, there remains some inconsistency in its quality between classes and subjects. Similarly, although leaders have overseen considerable improvement to the early years foundation stage, its outdoor space does not promote children's learning as well as it could.

At the previous inspection, in addition to improving teaching, leaders were tasked with working with the few parents and carers who had concerns about the school. Since that time, governors have provided parents with an email address that they can use to raise concerns. Leaders ensure that they are available at the start of

each day to speak with parents. The school has provided workshops for parents, most recently on internet safety.

Parents now hold the school in high regard. All the parents I spoke with at the start of the day told me that they are happy with the school. Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Many commented positively about the school's leadership and said how pleased they are with the progress their children are making in school. One parent represented the views of several when they wrote: 'My child continues to make good progress in all areas. The school is nurturing and caring. Staff respond quickly to any problems and teachers are always available to speak to.'

The local governing board (LGB) has contributed well to the school's improvement, as has the University of Wolverhampton Multi-Academy Trust (UWMAT). Members of the LGB have a good range of appropriate skills. They know the school well and are clear about the actions being taken to address weaknesses. They check that these actions are having the desired impact. UWMAT provides highly effective support for leaders and governors, mainly through its director of academies. For example, this support has contributed well to improving teaching and early years provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority in school, and it is well led. Staff have been comprehensively trained and are alert to the signs that pupils may need extra help. Staff readily report to leaders any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders deal with these appropriately, involving outside agencies when needed to ensure that pupils get the right support. Leaders are tenacious in challenging outside agencies, including the local authority, if they are unhappy about decisions made about pupils' care. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

All parents I spoke to and all who completed Parent View said that pupils are safe in school, as did all staff who completed their inspection questionnaire.

During the inspection, I spoke with many pupils. All told me that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They said that bullying is very rare indeed and they trust the school's adults to deal with any bullying or other problems they might have. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Several told me that you should only communicate online with people you know, because some people pretend to be someone they are not.

Inspection findings

- The inspection's first area of focus was on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This area is led effectively. Leaders know these pupils well and ensure that teachers know how to meet their needs when planning lessons and activities. All pupils with SEND have detailed plans that include clear targets and actions for teachers and pupils to put into practice.

Leaders review SEN plans each term, involving pupils and parents in these progress reviews. In addition to effective classroom teaching, pupils with SEND benefit from a range of additional help outside of lessons when they need it. Extra help that staff provide includes support with literacy, numeracy and social skills. Because of this effective provision, most pupils with SEND make good progress and several make very strong progress from their starting points.

- My second focus area was on the quality of teaching across the school. Teaching has improved over the last 12 months and it continues to do so. Although there remains some variability in its quality between classes, it is now largely effective across the school and there is much that is strong. Teachers now have a clear focus on the impact their teaching has on pupils' learning. Activities are no longer carried out for their own sake. Instead, teachers design lessons that ensure that pupils learn. Leaders carry out careful checks on teaching and they regularly share detailed feedback with teachers. Teachers reflect on their practice and all are keen to improve further. Teachers value the support and training that leaders provide for them.
- The quality of teaching varies between subjects. In English and mathematics, curriculum plans clearly set out the sequence in which pupils will learn and master concepts and skills. Combined with effective day-to-day teaching, this means that most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics as they move through the school. In some other subjects, leaders are at an early stage of setting out a sequence of learning. Consequently, work does not always take into account what pupils already know and understand. So, for example, although pupils study geography in all years, their geographical knowledge does not build from year to year as successfully as it should.
- Children enjoy their learning in all subjects. Pupils I spoke with listed many subjects they enjoy, including English, mathematics, physical education and art. Teachers' efforts to make learning engaging have proved successful. For example, pupils told me how excited they were to be writing their own Greek myths and others were thoroughly looking forward to baking 'Stone-Age cakes'.
- The inspection's final focus area was on early years provision in the Reception class. New leadership of the early years, in place for a little over 12 months, has transformed the Reception class. The indoor space provides a vibrant and stimulating learning environment that provides good resources in most areas of learning. There is an appropriate balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities and a strong focus on developing children's skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Adults intervene skilfully to help children to learn. Children behave well, sharing sensibly and listening attentively. Adults' assessments are accurate and used well to plan children's next steps in learning.
- There is a small outdoor area next to the Reception class. It is well equipped and serves well for some areas of learning, for instance when children are exploring and playing with water. However, its size means that outdoor activities that require more space have to take place on the playground, some way from the classroom. This means that children are unable to move freely between activities, and this inhibits their learning to some degree.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching continues to improve so that it is of a consistently good quality throughout the school
- the curriculum in all subjects is as well planned and sequenced as it is in English and mathematics
- the Reception outdoor space is of the same high quality as the indoor space.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, a representative of UWMAT and three members of the LGB, including its vice-chair. I visited all classes with you or other leaders, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. I talked with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime. I scrutinised several documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the checks made on the quality of teaching and records of safeguarding and child protection. I talked with several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I considered the 41 responses to Parent View, including the 25 free-text comments, and the 16 responses from members of staff to the online inspection questionnaire.