

6 March 2018

Mr Mark Hamblett
Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Waterloo Primary Academy
Waterloo Road
Blackpool
Lancashire
FY4 3AG

Dear Mr Hamblett

Short inspection of Waterloo Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 2018 with Paul Edmondson, Ofsted Inspector, 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 school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In April 2016, the school became part of the Zest Academy Trust. Since your appointment as principal in September 2017, you have worked with commitment and determination to raise pupils' aspirations. Governors and staff appreciate your open and honest approach. They welcome the clear direction you have given to the school. You leave no stone unturned in your quest to drive forward improvements in teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour. You have quickly grasped the school's many strengths and set about addressing the key aspects that need to improve through termly action planning, involving all staff and governors.

Together with the staff team, you have created a welcoming and inclusive community at Waterloo Primary Academy underpinned by strong relationships between pupils, teachers, parents and carers. The school's motto, 'Choose to succeed', is at the heart of everyone's work. All members of staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said they are proud to work at the school, and they believe the school is well led and managed. Staff feel valued and well supported. Pupils make strong progress by the end of key stage 2 and they are well prepared for secondary education. Pupils are polite and well mannered. A typical comment from pupils is: 'Teachers are caring and go out of their way to make things better.' Pupils behave well and respect each other and the adults who teach them. Pupils are keen to take responsibility, for example as school councillors, house captains and anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils who started at the school recently discussed how they were helped to feel part of the community from the outset.

The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and those who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were very positive about the school and its recent developments. They said that staff are approachable and care about their children. One parent wrote: 'My child is well settled and looks forward to going to school every day.'

Governors are passionate about the school. One commented: 'We want to provide a safe and secure environment where pupils can learn from their mistakes and improve their life chances.' Governors bring with them an excellent range of experience and expertise. They are appreciative of the regular, clear summaries of information which they now receive. This enables them to ask you, your leaders and teachers searching questions about how well pupils are doing. Governors maintain a good strategic overview of the school and have played a key role in the school's continued improvement. You appreciate the support and challenge of your school improvement adviser.

Governors, leaders and staff have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Improvement planning is now focused on the right priorities, and actions taken to date have had a positive impact. At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils made faster progress in writing. Leaders have successfully addressed this issue. Pupils enjoy writing activities. Real-world contexts act as 'hooks' to capture pupils' imagination and provide them with the opportunity to write for a purpose.

Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes have continued to improve. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 was above the national average in 2016 and was still high in 2017. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, progress in reading and writing was significantly above the national average. The unvalidated overall progress scores for reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 continued to be high in 2017.

You know the areas where you can improve, for example by doing more to ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend more frequently and reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You acknowledge that middle- and higher-ability pupils need to be challenged further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture for safety and pupils' well-being in school. You ensure that all appropriate checks on adults are made before they start to work at the school. Appropriate training ensures that staff and governors have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. You follow up any concerns diligently. You and your leaders work closely with outside agencies to secure pupils' safety. Governors regularly check that the school's safeguarding procedures are up to date. Pupils at the school feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils say that

there is no bullying and they know to whom they can turn if they have concerns.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. You and your team are working hard to further improve the attendance of pupils and reduce persistent absence. Staff follow up absences through formal warning letters, attendance meetings with parents and referrals to the local authority. You use a range of strategies and rewards to celebrate good attendance of individual pupils and classes. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend breakfast club. Consequently, the attendance of pupils is rising and persistent absence is reducing. However, you recognise that the attendance rate of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The second focus for the inspection related to the provision for children in the early years. Over the last two years, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was below the national average. Children enter the early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. Many children have particularly weak speech and language skills. Specialist speech and language support helps those children with specific learning difficulties to improve their communication skills and get off to a good start in the early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved and was closer to the national average in 2017.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have given mathematics a higher profile across the school. An effective focus on developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills has resulted in improvements in pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics. This was reflected in pupils' strong attainment in mathematics in 2017. An above-average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard at the end of key stage 1. The unvalidated overall progress score for mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was higher than the national score and represents a significant improvement on the previous year.
- A further line of enquiry related to the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1. Leaders had already identified that these pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You know the barriers to learning for these pupils very well. You have used funding appropriately to employ extra staff to support their progress. Teachers hold regular meetings to track pupils' progress and organise extra support for those pupils who may have fallen behind. In addition, you have ensured that no pupil misses learning experiences, such as outdoor education visits, because of financial difficulty. Provisional data in 2017 and scrutiny of pupils' work show that disadvantaged pupils are now catching up. However, you have rightly identified that disadvantaged pupils need to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Work scrutiny, learning walks and discussions with pupils in lessons indicate that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of pupils. However, you acknowledge there is further work to do to ensure that middle-ability and higher-ability pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and the standards that they reach in reading, writing and mathematics continue to improve
- middle-ability and higher-ability pupils are challenged to achieve the highest possible standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders and staff. I met with four members of the local governing body, including the chair. I also met with your school improvement adviser and held a telephone conversation with the chair of the trust. Accompanied by senior leaders, we visited a number of lessons to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' books. We met with a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2 and spoke to others in lessons and around the school. We heard some pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6.

We took account of 13 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, along with 15 free-text responses. Parents' views were also gathered through discussions at the start of the day. We considered the views of 32 staff through Ofsted's online questionnaire. No responses were received to the online questionnaire for pupils. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. We evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies about keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks, and attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also undertook a review of the school's website.