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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Chris Millward
Headteacher
Webheath First School Academy
Downsell Road
Redditch
Worcestershire
B97 5RJ

Dear Mrs Millward

Short inspection of Webheath First School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2016, 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. It is to your credit that you have done so while steering the school through some significant changes. Following the conversion to academy status, you restructured the leadership team to further strengthen the school's capacity for improvement. You have since secured substantial funding to improve and expand the school premises. You gained approval to change the school age range to 4–11 years from 1 September 2016. Throughout all of this you have provided the school with clear day-to-day direction and maintained a high standard of education for the pupils.

With the support of the staff you have firmly established a caring and nurturing ethos where every child's progress and personal development are equally valued. Parents recognise and appreciate this. One parent commented, 'Teachers provide an environment where children feel comfortable to express themselves and develop but are also happy to talk about any worries or issues that they might have. Teachers genuinely care. We feel very much part of the Webheath family.'

At the time of your last inspection, inspectors identified a need to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. You and the staff have relentlessly addressed this. Leaders hold regular meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' progress. They make sure that teachers use this information to provide suitably challenging activities that enable pupils to make strong gains in their learning. As a result,

pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has steadily risen year on year. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was well above the national average in all subjects in 2015. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels in all subjects was also well above national figures. Success is also evident in the early years. In 2015, a higher than average proportion of children who completed Reception achieved a good level of development.

The school's improvement plans focus on appropriate priorities. For example, leaders recognise that some children require additional support with speaking, listening and writing skills when they join Nursery. You have taken effective action to address this. You have introduced speaking and listening activities for children to continue learning at home. You have also organised for speech and language specialists to deliver training for staff. These actions are having a positive impact on children's learning. External assessments and your records show that more children are making rapid progress in these areas and are therefore better prepared for Year 1. However, improvement plans do not always include specific criteria to measure the extent to which, and how quickly, actions are helping the school to meet key priorities.

Leaders have worked closely with staff to implement the new approaches to assessment in key stages 1 and 2. You have organised effective training and support to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements are accurate. This includes effective partnership working with local schools. You recognise the need for leaders to refine further the school's new assessment system so that you can easily monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and ensure that none falls behind.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are extremely vigilant in making sure that pupils are kept safe. This is exemplified by the extremely thorough manner in which leaders have ensured pupils' safety during the current building work. Risk assessments have been suitably updated and all adults working on the school site have been diligently checked.

There are well-planned opportunities across subjects, such as science and design and technology, for pupils to consider and learn about potential risk, including e-safety. Governors make sure that all aspects of the school's provision meet safeguarding requirements. Parents, staff and pupils are united in their view that pupils are safe in school.

Procedures to ensure that all staff receive relevant training are robust, as are the protocols and practice for record-keeping. School records show that staff take a proactive approach to safeguarding. You are quick to address any concerns and you work closely with other agencies to ensure that concerns are dealt with promptly. The chair of governors is a 'Prevent' trainer. He has delivered training to staff. This has raised awareness and ensured that everyone has a clear grasp of new requirements, such as keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. Improvement plans focus on appropriate priorities. You recognise the need to add more specific criteria for measuring success to improvement plans so that leaders, including governors, can check the extent to which, and how quickly, actions are helping the school to meet key priorities and further improve provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Staff share expertise well and have regular opportunities to learn from each other's strengths. For example, subject leaders for science are working effectively to enhance and extend the provision for teaching and learning in science. Pupils are proud of their science work on display in corridors and classrooms. One teacher wrote, 'I feel more confident about teaching science now. We work together, we strive to improve all the time and no-one is ever too busy to help.'
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They find the curriculum varied and interesting. This is evident in pupils' work and in their comments which include, 'I love the selection of lessons that we have. There's always something different. You can be scientist of the week and wear the lab coat or you can find out about a Greek myth that was written thousands of years ago.' As a result of this broad and rich curriculum, pupils develop a love of learning.
- Governors are committed to the school and have a good range of skills and expertise. They are closely involved in the plans for expansion and they match their skills and expertise well with the school's priorities. They provide the school with a good level of support and challenge.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is checked diligently on an individual pupil basis and additional help is tailored carefully to meet their needs. As a result, these pupils achieve well. At the end of Year 2 in 2015, gaps between disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared to their peers had closed completely in all subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve well. Clear systems are in place to identify specific needs and additional support is provided by staff in school or specialists from outside. Care is taken to ensure that this is effective. One parent wrote, 'We are extremely grateful to Mrs Millward and her exceptional team of staff for their dedication and support. They go the extra mile and we want to bring this to your attention during the inspection.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's new assessment system is refined so that leaders can easily monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and ensure that none falls behind
- the school's improvement plans have clear criteria to measure success so that leaders, including governors, can easily check the extent to which, and how quickly, actions are helping the school to meet key priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, teachers and six governors including the chair of the governing body. You accompanied me on visits to classes. I spoke to pupils in classrooms and around the school and met with a group of pupils. I examined and discussed a range of documentation including samples of pupils' work, information about pupils' achievement, the school's improvement plans and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the views of 41 parents who wrote to me during the inspection and 72 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.