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Mr David Adams
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Dear Mr Adams

Short inspection of Hall Green School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016 with Graham Tyrer, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The predecessor school became an academy in February 2012. You joined the school as headteacher in September 2014. Members of the governing body told me that you were appointed with a mandate to consolidate and maintain the effective practice seen in the predecessor school while also developing and enhancing the work of the school. You have been successful on both counts. Almost all of the staff who completed the staff questionnaire agreed that the school has improved since the last inspection. All of the staff agreed that they are proud to be a member of staff at Hall Green School.

Along with senior leaders and governors, you have continued to provide a caring, nurturing and inclusive culture within which all pupils are encouraged to flourish both socially and academically. Most of the parents who spoke with inspectors or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child is well looked after and makes good progress in their academic studies. You have an accurate view of the school which correctly identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have sharpened the focus on every pupil making the best possible progress. Pupils and staff have risen to the challenge of the aspirational targets that are set. The vast majority of parents are fully involved in supporting their children to meet these targets. As a result, pupils achieve well in a

range of subjects, particularly in English, science, religious studies, business studies, information and communication technology (ICT) and computing.

Almost all teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' learning needs. They use this information effectively to plan appropriate, imaginative and engaging learning activities. The vast majority of pupils work hard and demonstrate a desire to do well in their studies and to achieve success. Information provided by school leaders shows that pupils across the school are doing well. However, you rightly recognise that pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4 could be better.

The governing body is ambitious for the school. Governors have an understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. They have achieved this through regular visits to the school and links with subjects. They hold leaders and teachers to account through effective appraisal and performance management. Governors are keen to further improve their effectiveness. They attend regular training and local authority governor network meetings to make sure they are up to date with current government guidelines and successful practice. However, governors have not ensured that all the school's policies fully reflect current guidance, nor have they ensured that the Year 7 catch-up fund improves the outcomes for pupils eligible for the additional funding.

You recognise the need to improve aspects of pupils' learning and behaviour and school leadership, including governance, still further. You have a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve and how to achieve your shared ambition with staff, parents, pupils and governors for it to become an outstanding school where 'everybody learns together to shape the future'.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors make sure that protecting pupils from harm and supporting potentially vulnerable pupils and their families is a high priority. All staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and safeguarding issues, including the duty to prevent pupils from being exposed to extreme or radical messages. Staff understand their safeguarding duties and have the necessary knowledge and understanding to ensure pupils are safe. The school site is secure and risk assessments are in place for trips, visits and other potentially hazardous activities.

A number of leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training. You have tightened up the interview and selection process to ensure that the vetting checks on staff are thorough and rigorous. For example, any gaps in an individual's employment or education history are meticulously investigated.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of how to keep safe from potential risks and dangers, for example from the use of social media, through assemblies and lessons delivered during form time. The vast majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils told inspectors that there are very few incidents of bullying and that staff deal with instances quickly

and effectively. Pupils are clear about whom they can go to if they have a problem. Almost all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child feels safe. However, leaders have not systematically checked that pupils have a better understanding of how to keep safe as a result of the school's 'safety' sessions.

Staff respond quickly and efficiently to pupils' absence. Your procedures include telephone calls to a pupil's home on the first day of absence, home visits and collecting pupils from home. As a result, absence and persistent absence levels (missing more than 10% of days from school) are consistently well below national figures. Leaders also make appropriate referrals to the local authority Children Missing in Education team if they have concerns about a child's long-term absence.

Inspection findings

- Since joining the school in September 2014, you have strengthened and developed many areas of the school. You provide a clear vision that has at its heart the welfare and progress of pupils. Your evaluation of the school accurately identifies that Hall Green is a good school with procedures and practices that are highly effective. As a result, pupils and groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do well in a wide range of subjects.
- You rightly recognise that while pupils' progress in mathematics is improving, further developments are needed. You and your leadership team have worked with the mathematics department to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. The majority of teachers use what they know about pupils to plan engaging and interesting learning activities. However, a minority of teachers do not make sure that pupils who speak English as an additional language make the progress expected of them.
- The majority of teachers use oral feedback and comments on pupils' work in line with the school's marking, assessment and feedback policy. This enables pupils to improve their work, and understand what they have done well and what they need to do to make it even better. However, a few teachers do not consistently provide pupils with feedback that is in line with the school's expectations. As a result, pupils in these classes do not do as well as expected.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils and demand that pupils work hard to the best of their ability and produce work that reflects their capabilities. As a result, most pupils do well in a range of subjects, particularly in English and science.
- Almost all pupils rise to the challenges set by teachers, form tutors, heads of house and support staff. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are positive, leading to a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils' conduct around the school is generally good and pupils are polite, thoughtful, helpful and understanding of the needs of others. For example, pupils are considerate of, and help, those in wheelchairs. However, a very small minority of pupils do not meet the school's high expectations for how they wear their uniform, behave in the narrow corridors or arrive to lessons on time. A few staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe that not all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

- Pupils enjoy coming to Hall Green School and speak highly of the help, support and guidance they get from staff. Potentially vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and appropriately supported. The school uses external agencies to support pupils effectively. For example, the local authority's Children Missing in Education team helps identified pupils improve their attendance. As a result, the vast majority of pupils attend well and there are few who are persistently absent.
- Most middle leaders evaluate their area of responsibility accurately. They use this information to implement appropriate and effective plans to improve pupils' social and academic outcomes. For example, almost all pupils leaving Hall Green School are well prepared for their next stage in life and find employment or move on to further education or training. Pupils do well in their academic studies, particularly in English, science, religious education, ICT and computing. However, not all staff use the information they have on pupils' abilities and needs to ensure that individuals and groups of pupils do as well as they should. For example, pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the progress expected of them in mathematics.
- The checks on the quality of learning and teaching are thorough and enable you to identify and support pupils and staff who are underperforming. You and governors use appraisal and performance management to set targets that help individual staff and the school to move forward. All of the staff responding to the inspection questionnaire said that the training you provide helps them improve their practice. They also value the freedom they have to take risks and to be innovative in the classroom for the good of the pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- assessment and feedback in lessons and in pupils' books are in line with the school's own policy and help pupils to improve the quality of their work and develop their knowledge and understanding
- all staff use the information they have about pupils' capabilities and progress to implement plans and actions that ensure groups of pupils, for example those who speak English as an additional language, do as well as they should
- all pupils wear the school uniform as intended, behave thoughtfully and responsibly in the narrow corridors, and arrive to lessons on time
- all groups of pupils make the progress, or more than the progress, expected of them in mathematics
- the impact of the 'safety' sessions delivered in assemblies and in form time is routinely checked and evaluated
- the impact of the Year 7 catch-up fund in helping eligible pupils catch up with their classmates is routinely checked and evaluated
- all statutory policies and procedures meet current guidelines.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, inspectors were able to discuss the work of the school with you, your leadership team and other staff. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in classes in Key Stages 3 and 4, including a lesson taught by you. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance, how they learn how to keep themselves safe and about what it feels like to be a member of the Hall Green School community. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school, during an assembly, at breaks and lunchtime as well as in lessons. Discussions with three school governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and telephone conversation with parents, helped to provide additional information. Inspectors looked at a range of school documents, including the checks on staff's suitability to work with children, the minutes of governors' meetings and the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil, parent and staff questionnaires.