

14 January 2019

Mrs Sharon Richards  
Executive Headteacher  
Holley Park Academy  
Ayton Road  
Oxclose  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear  
NE38 0LR

Dear Mrs Richards

### **Short inspection of Holley Park Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 2018, 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 March 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Holley Park Academy is a vibrant and welcoming school. Together with the headteacher of the school, you lead a committed team of staff who share your vision of high expectations and commitment to providing the very best for all pupils. The co-headteacher arrangements work well. You ensure a united approach to all leadership responsibilities and you are ably supported by a proficient deputy headteacher. This ensures consistency across the school for staff, pupils and parents and carers.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to provide middle leaders with opportunities to check the quality of teaching in their subjects. You have successfully managed this and now have an established, enthusiastic team of middle leaders around you. They exhibit high motivation and they act willingly upon the advice of senior leaders. They are proud of the skills that they have learned through relevant training and development. Consequently, they check regularly on pupils' progress and the standard of learning, providing timely advice and support to teachers where necessary.

You were also asked, at the time of the last inspection, to raise standards in mathematics across key stage 1. You acted quickly to tackle this, with pleasing results. For the past three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics has been above the national average. Pupils' mathematics books, examined during the inspection, show that pupils now have many opportunities to investigate and solve mathematical problems. There is a consistent

approach to the teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics and this has resulted in accelerated progress rates for pupils across the school.

Staff are appreciative of the support and professional opportunities that leaders and governors provide. They say that they enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and they have the pupils' interests at the centre of everything they do. Staff comments included: 'We are one big team and we work together well. The children's well-being and education is our main focus. We are like one big family.'

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of education and care that the school provides for their children. They say that it is a nurturing school where staff care for the pupils. One parent commented that, 'Teachers have instilled a love of learning,' and another stated, 'The school has a positive learning environment for all children to flourish'.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and display exemplary behaviour. They are confident and friendly and show respect for one another, adults and visitors to the school. Pupils talk with pride about the different responsibilities that they have through roles such as playtime monitors, members of the school council and friendship buddies. Pupils show mature and caring attitudes when they talk about their participation in the school's dementia café or collecting for the community foodbank.

The local governing board works positively with the trust board and the school's senior leaders. The chair of the governing body has been instrumental in ensuring that all governors are clear about the roles and responsibilities assigned to them, within the level of governance to which they belong. The local governing board checks on the actions you take to improve outcomes, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support for senior leaders and therefore they are well placed to drive continued school improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have made sure that staff and governors are well trained, so that they know what to do if they have any concerns. Governors carry out regular checks to ensure that policies are followed correctly. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

Case studies considered during the inspection show that you are tenacious in your approach to reporting and recording concerns. You are also relentless in your work with external agencies and in following up any actions so that families receive timely support. Ultimately, you are determined that every pupil in your school remains safe.

Pupils talk confidently about feeling safe because the staff look after them well. They say that they learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils showed that they had a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They say that bullying in school is very rare, but that if it did occur, school staff would deal

with it immediately. The majority of parents agree that the school keeps their children safe and that they are cared for effectively.

## **Inspection findings**

- By the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils made stronger progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. I looked at how leaders tracked pupils' progress across the school and the quality of teaching in writing in key stage 2. A thorough assessment system is in place that is understood by all teachers. Checks made on pupils' work show that teachers' assessments are accurate. The leader of English monitors pupils' writing closely. Pupils' books show that recently introduced changes to the teaching of writing are beginning to improve the quality of pupils' writing, particularly at the higher standard. However, there has not been sufficient time for this to have made a positive difference to pupils' achievement.
- You and other leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils very closely. You have compiled a detailed plan which identifies any barriers to pupils' learning as well as the targeted activities. Governors check on how effectively additional funding is supporting these pupils to make good progress. Together, we spent time looking at the work of disadvantaged pupils. The majority of them are making good progress from their relative starting points across key stages 1 and 2. This is because teachers have high expectations of what disadvantaged pupils can achieve.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been above the national average for the last two years. However, in 2018, the proportion reaching the greater depth standards in these subjects was below the national average. Work in pupils' books on occasion show that pupils are given work that does not sufficiently challenge them. As a result, pupils do not move on to content in lessons quickly enough to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- You place a high importance on securing the welfare of pupils. You and your staff have effective systems in place, are strong role models and provide a respectful learning environment. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour observed during lessons and at breaktimes was exemplary. Pupils are attentive, work cooperatively, listen courteously to each other, confidently express their own ideas and respect those of their peers. Pupils say that if they were worried about anything, they know whom to talk to about it. They say that staff will always listen to their concerns and act upon them immediately.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their rates of attendance, which are above the national average. There are also low levels of persistent absence. You and other leaders make detailed checks on pupils' absences to make sure that pupils are safe and that they attend school regularly. You strongly discourage parents from taking holidays during term time, which would result in pupils not attending school. Consequently, attendance rates have improved over the last three years. In 2018, attendance was above the national average and it

continues to improve.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop pupils' proficiency and creativity in writing, so that a higher proportion attain the higher standard at key stage 1 and key stage 2
- there is sufficient challenge for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1, so that the proportion of pupils reaching the greater depth standard is at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Aitchison  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the headteacher, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. I met formally with a group of pupils to discuss their attitudes to learning and their views of the school. I listened to a group of pupils from Years 3 and 4 read and discussed reading with them. Together with you or the headteacher, I made visits to classrooms to observe pupils learning and took a learning walk around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities, as well as discussing information from the school's assessment system. I checked procedures and processes in place for safeguarding. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and evaluations of teaching and learning. I checked records and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance. I took account of 38 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses.