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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Ashleigh Dunn
Headteacher
Manston St James Primary Academy
Sandbed Lane
Crossgates
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8JH

Dear Mrs Dunn

Short inspection of Manston St James Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 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.

In May 2017 the school became part of the Abbey Multi-Academy Trust. Since then, there have been many changes to the staffing team within the school, including within the senior leadership team. You joined the school in February 2019 to support the interim headteacher, who has since left. You have recently become the permanent headteacher and have wasted no time in securing any improvements that were already in place. You have also taken rapid action to address any areas where you felt improvements were required. For example, you have worked with staff to improve their morale, improved the behaviour around school and have communicated with parents to keep them updated. You have also restructured the senior leadership team. Staff are excited by your appointment and recognise that you bring the right skills with you in order to move the school forward. One member of staff stated, 'There was a collective sigh of relief when Mrs Dunn informed the whole school that she was going to be the permanent headteacher.'

Effective leadership from the trust has enabled the school to keep improving throughout this turbulent time. Resources have been prioritised in order to meet the unique needs of the school. Teaching and learning in the majority of classes has continued to improve because leading teachers, deployed by the trust, have provided effective support. Teachers and teaching assistants value this support and say their teaching has improved as a result. Consequently, although some classes

have not had a permanent teacher, the trust have ensured that most pupils have continued to progress in their learning. Teaching is consistently strong across the school.

You lead your team with purpose, determination and integrity. You have already improved staff morale because you value all people within your team. Staff are positive about the changes you have made and appreciate the way in which you have made them. You lead from the front, modelling the way you want staff to behave. As a result, staff are happy and feel valued.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are well supported from the time of their appointment. Lead professionals provide personalised training based on each teacher's identified needs. Through regular weekly mentoring sessions, NQTs are provided with the skills and abilities to help them develop their ongoing practice. One NQT stated, 'I don't feel like I've just had the one mentor, I feel like the whole school are all my mentors.' As a result, NQTs feel they are valued members of the school team.

Behaviour is good. Pupils work well together in the classroom. They are polite when moving around the school and pupils say that behaviour is much better since the new behaviour policy has been in place.

The majority of parents are very positive about the strengths of the school. They recognise that changes to the leadership have been concerning. Alongside this, changes to teaching staff have also created further unease. However, most parents feel that this has not been disruptive to learning in the majority of classes. Parents speak highly of the changes that have been put in place since your arrival and can see improvements already. One parent commented, 'Despite recent unsettlement in the school due to the change of headteachers and large amount of staff turnover, my child has always been happy at this school and progressed well.' Another parent stated, 'Over recent years the school has gone through a lot of change, but throughout I feel they have strived to put our children first. I believe that as a school they are very focused on the whole child, keen to produce good people and citizens.' You are particularly aware that you need to rebuild the trust of some of the parents and, in order to do this, you make yourself visible outside school daily to address any concerns.

The governing body has a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and knows which areas need to be improved. Governors demonstrate commitment, expertise and experience. They provide challenge and support to the leadership team. Governors regularly visit the school, meeting with pupils and staff members to check on how improvements are progressing. They also liaise with parents in order to keep them updated and help to allay any concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and demonstrate awareness of the warning signs that a

child could be at risk. Teachers have a thorough understanding of their safeguarding role because they receive weekly bulletins on a wide range of safeguarding issues, including county lines and the government's 'Prevent' duty. You have put checks in place to ensure the information is read and understood. Pupils know about e-safety and how to avoid risks linked to internet use.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I wanted to find out if the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection had been addressed. Firstly, I considered if leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The first set of results since the new trust took over show that standards rose significantly in all areas of the curriculum. This is because there is a relentless focus by the trust on ensuring high expectations and consistency across the school. Alongside this, senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and provide helpful feedback to teachers. Lead practitioners work with identified teachers in order to help them work on identified areas for improvement. Standards remain high and the majority of pupils are making the progress they are capable of.
- A stronger focus on handwriting and spelling has resulted in well-presented written work across the school. Pupils in key stage 2 are expected to identify their own spelling errors in their work, and teachers give them time to check their work and correct them. This is helping pupils to become more accurate in their spelling and is increasing levels of independence. Pupils in key stage 1 demonstrate good knowledge of punctuation, using capital letters and full stops correctly. Pupils are exposed to a range of new vocabulary in order to extend their understanding and support their writing skills. As a result, writing standards are good.
- The second area for improvement identified at the previous inspection was to ensure that work is at the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils. In 2018, the progress of all groups improved significantly. Leaders carefully monitor the progress of groups and quickly put extra support in place where this is needed. As a result, there have been successes in the number of boys reaching both the expected and the higher standard in key stage 1 and 2. Pupils in receipt of support paid for through the pupil premium funding made better rates of progress than seen previously and they continue to do so. This is because leaders are more thorough in how they track progress over time and teaching is matched to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils work well together. In a mathematics lesson, pupils worked in pairs to solve mathematical equations. The teacher had grouped the pupils carefully in order to allow a higher proportion of pupils to access the most challenging tasks and so pupils grew in confidence and made good progress.
- Early reading skills are taught well. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to read to adults. Books are well matched to ability, enabling the less able readers to enjoy success in reading stories. Children in the early years enjoy a range of phonic-based activities that are well planned to their individual learning needs. For example, a group of boys in the Reception class enjoyed

identifying the end sounds of words by listening to the word, then racing to find the correct sound displayed around the fence. Standards in phonics continue to improve because teachers plan work that is closely matched to pupils' abilities.

- I also wanted to know how well the school curriculum meets the needs of all the pupils. In English, mathematics and religious education (RE), the curriculum is exciting and has been advanced well. The teaching of RE is a key strength of the school. Teachers provide many opportunities to explore moral values through questioning. One class had considered the effect that not telling the truth has on others. Pupils' responses show deep thinking and understanding of the subjects covered. One pupil wrote, 'The person telling the lie feels guilty for lying and the person receiving the lie feels betrayed if they find out the truth.' The RE curriculum builds on prior knowledge and is high priority within the school. Every class has a faith visit to deepen pupils' understanding and put learning into context. Links with the local church are well established. Art is used well to develop cross-curricular links. Pupils have designed and made liturgical banners, which they have hung up proudly in the hall. Work around artists has focused on how god and heaven have been portrayed over time. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge about Christianity and other faiths.
- The picture for other subjects is more mixed. For instance, in physical education, work is still in the early stages of development. Leaders have reviewed their use of the sports funding and further staff training is planned to enhance teachers' skills in teaching all elements of this subject. In history, pupils had listed all the key facts they were going to learn for some topics. However, pupils found it difficult to remember what they had learned in previous topics without referring to their books.
- I also looked at attendance across the school. Your whole-school attendance has continued to improve and is in line with that seen nationally. You have engaged with identified families in order to help them improve their children's attendance. For the vast majority of families this work has been successful. However, persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils remains above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the improvements already in place and secure the improvements to the standards pupils reach in mathematics, reading and writing
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve
- curriculum plans take account of how pupils will be taught to remember key facts from the topics they cover.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officers of Abbey Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (ce), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Lunn
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I observed teaching and learning with you and your leaders. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read. I met with you, senior and middle leaders and a group of staff, including newly qualified teachers and teaching assistants. I spoke with a group of pupils in key stage 2 and informally with pupils in lessons and around the school. I spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with both the co-chief executive officers of Abbey Multi-Academy Trust and spoke to a representative from the diocese. I spoke to a parent on the telephone, as requested. I reviewed a range of school documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school's development plans and assessment records; minutes from the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I considered the information posted on the school's website. I took into account the 60 free-text responses from parents and the 87 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View. I also took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.