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Miss Emma Stacey
Principal
Fairfield Primary Academy
Toton Lane
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Dear Miss Stacey

Short inspection of Fairfield Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Fairfield Primary School converted to become an academy as part of the Spencer Academies Trust in September 2013. You, your staff and governors continue to aspire for pupils to achieve well and develop independence in their learning. You have established a highly effective and unified team of staff who enjoy working at the school and feel motivated and respected. The staff agree that the school is led and managed well.

You have promoted a culture at Fairfield Primary Academy through which pupils are cared for and given a chance to shine. Your academy motto is 'Shine'. It stands for Success, High expectation, Independence, Never give up, Equality. It is brought to life daily because you have established clear systems and routines which encourage pupils to do their best. Pupils say that they are proud to attend the academy. Certificates that classes have earned for reading and attendance adorn the walls of the school, alongside pupils' art work that reflects the academy's values, such as friendship and tolerance. Teachers and teaching assistants praise pupils in lessons for offering thoughtful answers and parents are welcome to attend 'wow' sessions, where they can celebrate their children's work.

Pupils understand the Fairfield Standard, which sets out the expectations you have of how pupils should behave and present themselves in school. Pupils are expected

to walk around school in an orderly manner, wear their school uniform, show good manners and respect towards others, and to work hard. Staff gently, but successfully, encourage the pupils to meet this standard, so that the academy is an orderly, friendly and happy place in which to learn. Pupils told me that the standard is there to keep them safe. They think it is a good idea because 'we all look like part of a family, representing our school'.

Pupils talk about their school with pride. They say that teachers make their learning fun. Pupils value the weekly 'Shine Time' sessions, in which every member of staff works with a mixed-age group of approximately 12–15 pupils to discuss issues such as friendship and online safety. These sessions have also been successful in encouraging pupils to read regularly at home.

Governors offer an effective balance of support and challenge to you and your leadership team. They are strategic in their approach and have a very clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors visit school to see it in action for themselves. They attend an annual meeting with staff and parents to celebrate the successes of the school and to begin to plan for future improvements. In this way, you and your governors ensure that staff and parents can feel involved in the developments of the school.

You, your staff and governors benefit from the support that you receive from the Spencer Academies Trust, for example in training for staff and governors and in implementing a system to track the progress that pupils are making. Leaders at all levels benefit from meeting with leaders from other schools. You are outward-looking in your approach to improving your school. You and your leaders consider research studies and best practice from partner schools to determine the best ways forward for Fairfield Academy.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the safeguarding of pupils is a very high priority at Fairfield Primary Academy. The single central record shows that the appropriate vetting checks are made when new staff are appointed. You are the designated senior person for safeguarding, but you have appointed four other senior members of staff to act as safeguarding leads in your absence. They have received the necessary training in order to carry out this important role effectively.

Your records relating to safeguarding are well kept. You and your senior staff hold regular meetings to discuss potentially vulnerable pupils and you make referrals to the relevant agencies, if this is required.

The academy's safeguarding policy aligns with that of the Spencer Academies Trust and contains useful subsidiary guidance, so that the staff at Fairfield Primary Academy are in no doubt as to what to do to raise a concern. All staff receive up-to-date training to make sure they are alert to the warning signs of potential problems.

Pupils say that they are taught during assemblies and 'Shine Time' how to keep themselves safe. They spoke knowledgeably, for example, about 'stranger danger' and safe use of the internet.

Inspection findings

- Pupils achieve well. The school's assessment information shows that pupils currently in school have made good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics this year. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years has risen year on year since 2013 and is now above the national average for 2015. This indicates that children are getting off to a good start in the Reception class.
- By the end of Year 6, published data for 2015 showed that pupils' progress and attainment were generally in line with national expectations and sometimes above.
- The exception was reading, where the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard fell slightly short of the national average. You, astutely, recognised this and immediately put in place training and additional resources to improve the standards in pupils' reading across the school. This has already been successful.
- Pupils say that they enjoy reading much more now and appreciate the wider range of books they can choose from.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has risen this year and a greater proportion of pupils attained the new expected level at the end of Year 6 than was seen nationally in 2016.
- Good teaching in all classes is characterised by the highly effective use staff make of their questioning skills. Teachers and teaching assistants alike typically ask pupils to explain their thinking. This means that teachers and teaching assistants are able to tackle without delay any misconceptions that pupils may have.
- One of the initiatives you have implemented is the introduction of tablet computers for all pupils in key stage 2. Pupils enjoy using this technology regularly in their lessons as a reference tool. They also use their tablet computers to help them to improve their skills in reading and mathematics, for example.
- Pupils say that they also make good use of their tablet computers to continue their learning at home. All pupils who spoke with the inspector said this had helped them, for example, to improve their skills in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers make effective use of assessment to match the learning task closely to the ability of the pupils. A quick assessment at the start of a lesson, or a unit of learning, enables the teacher to check on what the pupils already know, can do and understand.

- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, each lesson has a 'starter, main course, dessert, coffee and mints', representing the level of difficulty of the task. Pupils can either choose the level of challenge that they are ready to tackle or they may be directed by their teacher to the task that is just right for them.
- Pupils say that if they are stuck, or if they are ready to move on with their learning, an adult will intervene so that time in lessons is not lost. Teachers make sure that the most able pupils are challenged appropriately, so that they make good progress over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding are generally supported well to make good progress. This is evident in the outcomes for pupils by the end of Year 6, which demonstrate that you have been successful in your drive to narrow the gap in attainment for these pupils. You acknowledge, however, that you do not track closely enough how well the funding is being used to help the most able pupils who are eligible for it, in order to ensure that all of the pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. In all of the lessons I visited with either you or one of your deputies, pupils knew what they were learning and how that linked to previous lessons. This is because the teachers made the purpose of the learning explicit to them. As a result, learning makes sense to the pupils. For example, in one lesson, pupils were able to describe with great clarity how improving their verbs and vocabulary would enable them to improve their journalistic writing, or even help them to write a CV (curriculum vitae) when they are much older.
- Pupils behave well in class and around school. They are respectful towards each other and adults alike.
- Pupils demonstrate their good manners around school, holding doors open for each other.
- Pupils are frequently asked to discuss their work with their classmates and they do this willingly and sensibly. In lessons, pupils engage well with their learning whether they are working on their own or are being supported by an adult.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the many opportunities they have to learn to play a musical instrument. During my visit, older pupils were taking part in preparations for a summer concert of music, dance and singing, which their parents would attend.
- All of the parents who talked with me during my visit spoke very highly about the school. They praised the support that their children had received in settling in to the school and said that their children enjoyed coming to the school. This view was echoed in almost all of the comments that parents made using Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

- A very few parents expressed some concern over how effectively the school responds to accusations of bullying, but the pupils who spoke with me said that bullying was rare and that, if it did happen, they were confident that a trusted adult would deal with it for them.
- Pupils' books show that they make good progress over time. Some pupils, however, do not present their work neatly in their mathematics books. Teachers do not insist that pupils consistently draw lines, graphs and geometric shapes with a ruler, or set out their calculations clearly. This leads to pupils' mathematics sometimes being inaccurate.
- In addition, books showed that, while pupils build up their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts logically over time and teachers afford them opportunities to tackle problems, pupils have far fewer opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
- pupils present their work neatly in mathematics books, in order to avoid inaccuracies
- they track the effectiveness of spending of the pupil premium funding for all pupils who are eligible for it, so that all of these pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your two deputy headteachers and members of your wider leadership team to discuss the work of the school and the improvements that you have been making since becoming an academy. We considered the school's information about pupils' progress and achievement, attendance information and anonymised examples of teachers' appraisals. I met

with two governors, three representatives from Spencer Academies Trust and a group of pupils. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. I toured the school with you and one of your deputies to see the learning that was taking place in all year groups. I looked at pupils' work in their classrooms and in their books. I made a brief visit to breakfast club. I observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school and in class. I looked at a range of school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation and the school's development plan. I also took account of the views of parents through the online survey, Parent View, and I considered the response to the online staff and pupil questionnaires.