

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



16 October 2017

Miss Kizzi Matanga  
Acting Principal  
Fairfield Academy  
Mendip Avenue  
Scartho  
Grimsby  
North East Lincolnshire  
DN33 3AE

Dear Miss Matanga

### **Short inspection of Fairfield Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2017, 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 December 2010.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders, including governors, are providing stability and ensuring ongoing improvement through the changes in school leadership.

You have been the full-time acting principal since September 2017 and know the school well through your substantive post as vice-principal. You and a strong team of senior and middle leaders are further improving outcomes for pupils. Accurate school self-evaluation has ensured that leaders are working on the right priorities. You and your team offer different areas of expertise, providing strong direction to staff. This has resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection, for example in mathematics.

Leaders' commitment to providing high-quality training across teams has resulted in consistency in the teachers' use of strategies and in the high expectations of pupils. The increased skills and confidence of key stage 1 pupils in using phonics to aid their reading and writing are a good example of this improvement. Provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the phonics standard is better than that of pupils nationally. Where any aspects of teaching and learning are less than good, leaders respond with support and clear direction. As a result, the vast majority of teaching and learning is good or better.

Leaders have identified that there is still more work to be done to ensure that more

pupils reach at least the expected national standard in reading. Improved skills in phonics are having a positive influence in helping pupils to read with more fluency. However, leaders agree that pupils need to have more opportunities to read aloud throughout school. Teachers carefully balance strategies for pupils to gain a greater understanding of the text with activities that will inspire a lifelong love of reading. Teachers guide pupils in their reading choices with high-quality book recommendations provided by the trust and school leaders. Older pupils' work shows the strong progress they are making in understanding different texts. Productivity is high and learning covers a wide range of skills and different text types. Last year, you held workshops for the parents and carers of pupils in Year 2, to raise awareness of the national expectations and discuss the strategies you use in school. This had been successful in supporting parents in how to help their children at home. Consequently, you have planned similar workshops for parents across school this term. You are keen to develop different ways to involve and inform parents, particularly as some parents say that communication could be improved.

Most children start school with skills that are typical for their age in many areas. A few children have early literacy skills that are much lower. It is generally these pupils that make slower progress in reading throughout school. Leaders agree that these pupils need more precise support and direction to improve, as well as plentiful opportunities to read aloud throughout their time in school. In key stage 1, leaders have already put in place some activities to inspire pupils to read aloud. Pupils are eager to discuss their visits from Benji the dog. They explain how he comes into school and listens to pupils read. They say that they must try to read to him 'calmly and with expression'. Parents have told you how these pupils are eager to read to their own pets at home.

Governors have a very good understanding of their role. They know the school well. They value the governors' training provided by the trust. They say that this has helped them to focus their support and challenge to school leaders. Governors are confident in the good job school leaders do in bringing about improvement. In turn, they are committed to making sure that they carry out their duties efficiently and effectively. They ask questions about the detailed information they receive from leaders. They regularly check the success of leaders' work through school assessment information, visits to school and discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.

Leaders gave a great deal of consideration to joining a trust and, indeed, to which was the right trust for the pupils at Fairfield. Leaders say the trust's commitment to providing a wealth of enrichment opportunities has been one of the most positive aspects of the partnership for the pupils. Activities and events in sports and the arts are particularly high profile. For example, many pupils regularly take part in inter-school sports events and drama opportunities, such as the Year 4 performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' at a Lincoln theatre last year. Pupils' understanding across some aspects of the curriculum is not as strong. For example, they do not demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of different beliefs, faiths and cultures in society.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There are clear procedures for identifying and reporting concerns that everyone understands.

Effective systems are in place for the checking and recruitment of new staff. New arrangements within the trust mean that school leaders and office staff can easily access support when needed and regular checks on procedures are made. The trust conducts a safeguarding audit each year, which highlights aspects of the school's work that can be further refined.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe through a variety of assemblies, class discussions and lessons. Older pupils take a lead in helping and supporting others. For example, buddies organise games for the younger pupils and help them to have positive playtimes. As well as supporting staff in the office and around school, the 'job squad' takes care of pupils in the dining hall and on the playground.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I explored several aspects of the school's work, including the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Findings in reading are explained earlier in this letter. Standards in mathematics have continued to rise as leaders' focused plans for improvement are carried out consistently across classes. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to explain their ideas and give reasons for their answers using their developing skills and mathematical vocabulary. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are confident to 'have a go' at mathematical tasks. They explain their answers and give reasons for the strategies they have used. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics is above average. This is evidenced in pupils' work, the end of key stage 2 results for 2016 and provisional results for 2017, as well as the school's own assessment information.
- I looked at the provision and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are making good progress as a result of strong leadership, a good understanding of individual pupils' needs and an improved system for checking on the progress pupils are making. School leaders have worked with the academy improvement leader to ensure that there are high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Progress is carefully checked using clearly defined steps of progress alongside a thorough study of the pupils' work. Findings feed directly into individual pupils' plans, along with contributions from the pupils and their parents. In class, effective support from teaching assistants is well balanced with opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their skills independently.
- Parents I spoke to during the inspection were generally positive about the school, particularly about the opportunities their children have to take part in sport and drama activities. There were very few responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, but

these and conversations with some parents during the inspection highlighted that communication between home and school could be better. You agree that this is something you would like to further improve, with staff, governors and the trust, as you strongly value the partnership with parents.

- Pupils are polite and display good attitudes to learning and play throughout school. Pupils know that it is important to show respect to everyone and are developing good moral values. However, they are unsure about why people have different beliefs and faiths.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils with skills in reading that are lower than those typical for their age are given more direction in how to improve, as well as having frequent opportunities to read aloud
- pupils' understanding of different faiths, beliefs and cultures is improved
- work to communicate effectively with parents is further developed.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North East Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you and I spent time together in classrooms and looking at pupils' work. We discussed leaders' evaluation of the school and resulting plans for improvement. Senior and middle leaders were involved in many of these conversations and we discussed the success of actions already taken.

I met with representatives from the governing body, and with staff and pupils. I spoke to the David Ross Education Trust academy improvement leader on the telephone.

I studied a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance, the quality of teaching and learning, and governance. I reviewed external reports about the school's work.

I spoke to parents and considered the seven responses in Ofsted's Parent View, as well as the 23 pupil responses in the Ofsted questionnaire.

