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Mrs Lisa Macaulay
Headteacher
Atkinson Road Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Macaulay

Short inspection of Atkinson Road Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although you are only in your first week of headship, your transition from deputy headteacher is seamless. This is because of the considerable investment in succession planning undertaken by both the trust and the previous headteacher. Your detailed knowledge of the highly complex and continuously changing context of the school, along with your vision for the future, has enabled you to 'hit the ground running' and get straight on with making sure the school continues to improve. Your enthusiasm for the role and your dedication and commitment for the pupils and staff of Atkinson Road shine through everything you do. This is enabling you to build upon the solid foundations laid by the previous headteacher.

You have inherited equally committed senior and middle leaders, who share your energy and determination to provide the very best education for the pupils in your charge. Governors and the wider trust are hugely supportive of you and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to enable you to be successful.

You manage high levels of pupil mobility well. Significant numbers of pupils arrive at or leave the school at times other than those expected. Many pupils are recently arrived in the country, speaking little or no English, and their length of stay at your school is variable. In addition, you manage two resource bases, for pupils who have additional speech and language needs, on behalf of the local authority. This also contributes to the continual changes in the school's population. In order to manage

this considerable flux, you have two dedicated new arrivals classes and invest heavily in pupils' pastoral care, which is well planned and highly effective. As a result, pupils have a strong sense of belonging to Atkinson Road and thrive in this wonderfully supportive school.

Pupils generally behave well and are respectful of each other and of adults. This is because of the strong values that permeate all aspects of school life and that, for the most part, pupils are happy to comply with. You use the dedicated team of professionals employed by the school to support some of your most vulnerable pupils effectively. You handle any serious breaches of the school's rules sensitively and proportionately.

You have secured accurate assessment procedures and use resources effectively to support pupils who need additional help with their learning. Pupils start school with skills below those typically expected and, despite your best efforts, the complexities of the school's admissions mean that pupils' published outcomes over time are below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. You are not complacent and staff work hard to accelerate pupils' progress to improve this. However, the published data masks the achievement of those pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who complete all of the key stage at the school, your 'constant cohort'. Their progress is also carefully mapped as they move through the school and your assessment information shows that they achieve broadly in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages 1 and 2. Across the school, pupils' progress from their varying starting points is good, including that of disadvantaged pupils. Progress is stronger in writing and mathematics than in reading, where there is more variability. Writing was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection and actions taken have improved rates of progress in writing effectively.

Although you maintain detailed records of pupils' achievement and track their progress meticulously, your school development plan is not sharply linked to the improvements in pupils' outcomes, including those of disadvantaged pupils, which you desire.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe. Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff training is up to date, reflecting the latest government guidelines. You have established thorough systems for staff to report any concerns, which they follow accordingly. Consequently, all staff know the important role they play in keeping children safe. Records of any incidents are detailed and there is a clear chronology of actions taken. Referrals to outside agencies are made in a timely manner, to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need when they need it.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They told me bullying and poor behaviour 'doesn't happen much'. They expressed great confidence that if it did a member of staff would deal with it promptly.

Inspection findings

- You have rightly prioritised improving pupils' attendance. Your dedicated attendance team ensures that absence rates are reducing. In 2017, overall attendance improved from previous years and was slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils regularly away from school has also reduced as a result of the school's actions.
- In the past, pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1 have been below the national average. In order to improve outcomes, you have reduced the size of teaching groups to give more highly focused and targeted support to individuals and to small groups of pupils. However, you recognised that over time inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in phonics have crept in.
- You recognise that pupils' progress in reading needs to accelerate further, so that more pupils can achieve at the higher standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2, especially your 'constant cohort'. Together with your subject leader, you have developed a detailed action plan that identifies the specific actions you are taking to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. It is too early to measure the long-term impact of your actions. However, you are certainly developing strongly pupils' love of reading, as pupils heard to read talked excitedly about the new books they are able to share.
- You have rightly prioritised developing an early years unit as one of your key priorities for improvement, as you welcome the neighbouring nursery school into your school. Although this was effective from 1 January 2018, you worked tirelessly in the preceding terms to ensure a smooth transition. You have also rightly prioritised establishing consistent safeguarding arrangements and familiarising yourself with the parents, children and staff of the nursery school. You know there is more work to do to align the practices of Nursery and Reception together. You have an exciting vision and a detailed action plan already in place, which are supported by governors and the wider trust.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils are able to secure strong phonics skills by the end of Year 1, to support their wider reading
- efforts to minimise the impact of high levels of mobility on the overall outcomes of pupils at the expected and higher standard in key stages 1 and 2 continue
- pupils', including disadvantaged pupils', progress in reading is accelerated further, so more pupils, especially in the 'constant cohort', can achieve at the higher standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2
- targets identified within the school development plan are linked sharply to the improvements in pupils' and disadvantaged pupils' achievement at both the expected and higher standard

- plans to align the practices of the Nursery unit and the Reception class are realised.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the impact of actions you are taking to continue to improve the school and to discuss safeguarding. We observed learning together in the early years and key stages 1 and 2. While in lessons, we looked at pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. I took account of the views expressed by six parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the written text comments made by four parents. I held meetings with three representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust. I had a meeting with the school improvement officer. I talked to a group of key stage 1 and 2 pupils and heard them read. I scrutinised a number of documents, including a range of safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. I also reviewed minutes from recent governing body meetings.