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Mr Steven Kernan
Headteacher
Newington Academy
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Dear Mr Kernan

Short inspection of Newington Academy

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are incredibly passionate about giving pupils the best possible educational experience to help them develop as confident individuals who are independent learners. You have created a culture in which staff and pupils excel. Your vision for excellence is supported by the whole school community and has contributed significantly to the school's improvement. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They understand the importance of their education and the need to develop a good vocabulary and speak articulately, something which the school works hard to encourage. Staff also feel very well supported and are keenly involved in their own professional development. They take shared responsibility for continually improving pupils' outcomes and enabling every child to succeed.

At the last inspection, you were tasked with improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have continued to develop their checks on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. This has resulted in the curriculum being taught in an increasingly consistent way throughout the school and with greater opportunities for challenge. Consequently, pupils' outcomes have continued to improve in English and mathematics in every key stage over time.

Pupils make strong improvement from their, often low, starting points with achievement building over time so that by the time pupils leave key stage 2, an above-average proportion reach the age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is also above that of other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2. You are now keen to increase the proportion of pupils who not only meet but also exceed the age-related expectations to be at least in line with the national average.

While pupils' progress is very strong over their time in school, you are aware that in key stage 1 attainment has been more consistently close to, or in line with, the national average. With leaders, you are continually looking for the marginal gains that would enable even more pupils to reach the expected standards. We agreed that clearer expectations for letter formation and the use of appropriate pencil grip in the early years and Year 1 would support pupils in making more rapid development with their writing. Likewise, when analysing the approach to reading, we agreed that in the early stages of learning to read, pupils would benefit from more opportunities to reread their books to develop fluency and accuracy.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and the progress their children are making. The parents I spoke to felt that the curriculum is exciting and interesting for their children. Pupils demonstrate resilience in their learning and are highly motivated by the purposeful activities which teachers provide. This results in strong attitudes to learning and pupils, in key stage 2 in particular, show great pride and care in the presentation of work in their books.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are passionate about the importance of safeguarding. You have made sure that procedures are effective and records are detailed and of high quality. A committed team keeps a close check on vulnerable pupils. They make sure that pupils receive the most appropriate support, which includes the use of external agencies when necessary.

Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and they trust that adults will sort out any incidents of misbehaviour. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns and are aware of different types of bullying which could occur. They confidently explain how to stay safe online. They appreciate taking on responsibilities such as being fitness leaders at lunchtime. Relationships are strong between staff and pupils. There is a nurturing and caring approach which pupils value and contributes to their positive attitudes to learning.

Inspection findings

- Staff have received non-threatening support and development through leaders' regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. It has developed their subject knowledge and confidence in providing increasingly challenging tasks for pupils. Staff highly value the support they receive. They welcome the opportunity to learn from each other and a very open culture contributes to their ongoing

development. Using the expertise within the school and through the multi-academy trust, staff have shared good practice with each other and have refined their skills. For example, they regularly carry out work scrutiny of each other's books and use the 'blink' process to see examples of good practice in an aspect of their teaching they wish to improve further. Staff can see how this professional development has been beneficial. They are clear that it has contributed to greater consistency in the teaching approaches for reading, writing and mathematics. In turn, this is enabling them to achieve continually improving outcomes for pupils. They recognise, for example, how the mathematics approach helps them to pitch the learning specifically to pupils' starting points.

- Reading has a high profile throughout the school. Leaders are passionate about pupils developing a love of reading. Competitions, inviting reading displays, cosy book corners and Friday afternoon whole-school reading time are examples of how pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. The recently introduced reading comprehension approach has made a positive impact throughout the school. You have begun to see gains in the proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the age-related expectations for reading throughout school.
- Leaders are determined that pupils learn to read as soon as possible. The English leader regularly checks the quality of teaching in phonics, carries out lesson observations and provides feedback to support staff in their subject knowledge and delivery. The leader has a clear vision about the structure of phonics sessions and makes sure that pupils have the opportunity to read and write in each daily session. She ensures that there is a consistent approach so that pupils develop familiar strategies to help them with sounding out and blending. Books are also well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge so they are able to read accurately and with growing confidence. Resources are used effectively to give pupils the tools they need to use and apply their newly acquired learning when carrying out activities across the curriculum. As a result of leaders' actions, phonics outcomes have continued to improve year on year, with provisional 2018 figures likely to be above the national average for the first time.
- Pupils who are not on track with their reading are quickly identified and have additional work to support their reading development. For example, some Year 2 pupils who did not meet the standard in Year 1 join the Year 1 pupils, where they receive tailored support to help them catch up. However, these pupils sometimes lack fluency. You acknowledge that when in the early stages of learning to read, pupils would benefit from more opportunities to reread their books so they become more accurate and fluent. This would also support their understanding of the books they are reading.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has increased year on year and the provisional figure for 2018 is likely to be above the national average for the first time. The early years leader has a good understanding of any patterns emerging in the data and has responded to these, with clear improvement. For example, girls had not performed as well as girls nationally in 2016 or 2017 with writing. However, as a result of leaders' actions, 82% of girls met the writing early learning goal in 2018. Learning journeys are used effectively to record children's development. They identify clear next steps so that staff are aware how to move children's learning

on. They also demonstrate the strong progress which children make during their time in Reception. We agreed that there are some missed opportunities, though, for children to develop accurate letter formation and appropriate pencil grip during their time in Reception. Establishing clear expectations for these skills and sharing them with staff in both Reception and Year 1 would enable pupils to make even faster gains with their learning as they enter key stage 1.

- The curricula for English and mathematics have been developed over time, approaches have become embedded and are consistently applied through the school. As these approaches have become more secure, outcomes in turn have continued to improve. Staff notice, for example, how much higher the pupils' starting points are at the beginning of each year. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge, which has developed through training and development, to plan work which is accurately pitched at pupils' starting points, allowing them to be appropriately challenged. In fact, pupils say their learning is just about right, not too hard and not too easy. There is no limit on what pupils are able to achieve and staff have an 'everyone can do it' attitude. The whole staff team are working hard to make sure that even more pupils not only reach but exceed the expectations by the end of each key stage.
- The school's core principles of respect, ambition and resilience are seen in action as pupils carry out their work. Pupils' exceptional learning behaviours are the result of high expectations from staff. In turn, pupils have the confidence to articulate their learning and explain their understanding. The focus leaders place on developing pupils' oracy, contributes strongly to this. For example, the focus on media across the curriculum gives learning a purpose and audience, and results in pupils producing high-quality outcomes.
- The wider curriculum inspires pupils. The classroom environments are truly exceptional and really immerse pupils in the curriculum theme. Consequently, pupils talk with enthusiasm about what they are learning. Likewise, the theme books which each pupil produces is an opportunity for them to present their work with pride. There are also countless cross-curricular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematics knowledge to further secure their understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an increasing proportion of pupils exceed the age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage
- in the early stages of learning to read, pupils routinely reread their reading books to help them develop greater accuracy and fluency
- teachers have consistently high expectations of children's letter formation and appropriate pencil grip, so these skills are established as quickly as possible.

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 Kingston Upon Hull City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding leader, the attendance officer and an administrator. I also spoke to the chair of the governing body and national director of education for the multi-academy trust. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance case studies, and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and scrutinised the work in a sample of pupils' books. I listened to three pupils read and met a group of eight pupils from key stage 2. I also talked to a sample of pupils during lunchtime. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of teaching staff and considered the 17 responses to the staff survey.