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Dear Miss Ashley

Short inspection of New Ford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2012.

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.

Under your strong leadership and clear direction, leaders have enhanced many aspects of the school's work since the school converted to academy status in 2016. You have raised expectations of staff and pupils and standards have risen year on year. A passion to ensure that every child accesses a rich curriculum and secures key skills and knowledge in reading, writing, mathematics and science pervades the school. Through the continual focus on teaching and developing the quality of education offered, you have created an exceptionally strong learning culture across the school.

The core curriculum has been carefully constructed. Regular opportunities to build on what they already know help pupils develop confidence to embrace new learning. Then they successfully apply what they know and can do independently. Teaching sequences have been developed and secured to take full account of individual pupils' needs. Leaders skilfully track pupils' progress. Careful analysis of the information gathered on pupils' achievement and progress ensures that all

leaders know exactly where there are gaps in understanding or where particular groups may not be doing as well as others. Previous gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding have been addressed. Any pupil at risk of falling behind is quickly helped and supported to acquire the necessary skills to enable them to catch up. As a result, pupils are constantly challenged to deepen their learning. Progress is exceptionally strong and the majority of pupils reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing number reach the higher standards. As a result, outcomes for pupils at every stage have risen continually over the last three years.

Leadership is a key strength of the school. This is a result of the determined and highly effective leadership provided by you and your deputy headteacher and your ability to develop and empower other staff. Senior and middle leaders are also highly effective. They are enthusiastic and demonstrate an excellent understanding of school improvement. They, like you, take a strategic approach to developing and improving the quality of teaching in their phase and subject areas. Self-evaluation of the school is accurate and identifies the priorities for development. All leaders have detailed, comprehensive action plans which they use to drive further improvement. Actions are carefully monitored at regular intervals. The cycle of school improvement is deeply embedded at all levels.

The leadership of teaching is exceptional. Ensuring a well-qualified motivated staff team has been central to the improvements made since the last inspection. Staff value, and make the most of, the ongoing professional development opportunities provided. Through highly effective support and coaching, senior leaders ensure that subject knowledge is secure for all staff and pedagogy developed. Your checks on the quality of teaching are meticulous, and leaders provide detailed guidance and feedback to help teachers get the best from pupils in terms of learning and outcomes. Highly effective teaching across all year groups enables almost all pupils to achieve well.

Collectively, members of the board of trustees have the skills to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of school leadership and the school's performance over time. They know the school well and are committed to, and ambitious for, every pupil. Due to the focus on the quality of teaching and learning in the school, governors have not always kept a close eye on ensuring that all statutory requirements for the school's website are met. During the inspection, leaders updated documents and uploaded them to the website so that it was compliant.

The school provides a calm environment focused on learning where pupils behave well, work hard and enjoy all that school has to offer. Attendance rates are high. Pupils are polite and well-mannered, and behave well. They welcome the opportunity to share their work and talk about their learning. Pupils say they rise to the challenges provided by teachers. Parents who spoke to me during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive. Many used the word 'fantastic' to describe their child's experience at the school and were confident that their children were doing very well at New Ford Academy.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of keeping children safe is evident in the school. You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You know your families well and have an extensive knowledge of the issues facing the local community. The team of experienced and knowledgeable designated safeguarding leaders follow up every concern to ensure that vulnerable children and their families receive timely and appropriate help. They build up strong relationships with parents and provide effective support for children and their families.

All staff are appropriately trained and understand their responsibility for keeping children safe. They check if pupils have left notes for the 'worry monster' and provide highly effective support to help pupils deal with any anxieties they may have. Pupils trust adults to help them and say that they feel safe and supported at school.

Inspection findings

- Until recently, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check the end of Year 1 was below national averages. As a result of highly effective teaching in phonics across the school, outcomes have risen and are now above national averages. Pupils quickly learn to decode and develop their reading fluency through a wide range of reading opportunities. Pupils use and apply their phonics knowledge when reading and writing independently. Leaders ensure that early reading skills are built upon and further developed.
- A clear strategic approach to teaching reading, especially through guided reading sessions, is paying dividends. High-quality training enables staff to deepen their subject knowledge and develop confidence in teaching reading. Daily focused guided reading sessions provide opportunities for teachers to get to know their pupils as readers. Teaching sequences develop a love of reading and familiarity with a key text before it is used to teach specific reading skills. Planned reading sessions are purposeful and ensure that pupils acquire reading skills such as inference, deduction, skimming and scanning.
- Book choices such as 'Traction Man', 'Egg Drop' and 'The Bog Baby' are chosen to engage all pupils and especially boys. Discussion with pupils indicates their ability to comprehend what they are reading. They give thoughtful, detailed responses to the texts they read. Pupils, including boys and those who are disadvantaged, are making strong progress in their reading.
- Outcomes in mathematics have risen over the last three years and pupils make very strong progress from their different starting points. This is the result of a clear strategy to improve staff subject knowledge and embed a consistent teaching sequence across the school. Pupils acquire key knowledge, learn and consolidate new skills and then demonstrate their understanding in a range of problem solving and reasoning work. Direct teaching and modelling by adults ensure that mathematical language is understood from an early age. Explicit success criteria shared and discussed before beginning any task enable pupils to

work independently. Pupils know what they need to do to be successful.

- Expectations in mathematics are mapped out for every year group. Leaders carefully track pupil progress identifying exactly what each pupil can do in order to determine their next steps. A comprehensive intervention plan is in place to support any pupil identified as needing more help. Same day support, additional booster classes and opportunities to consolidate prior learning help pupils who may be struggling or falling behind. Additional support, led by highly skilled adults, is sharply focused on pupils' areas of difficulty. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access a wide range of mathematical resources. Adults support them to develop a secure understanding of basic principles before dealing with more abstract concepts. Pupils engage enthusiastically and are helped to quickly secure the necessary skills and understanding.
- The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in writing, are a key priority for leaders. They have high expectations of every pupil and put no ceiling on what pupils can achieve. Leaders monitor the progress pupils make very closely. Opportunities to write in phonics sessions and in grammar, punctuation and spelling activities are helping pupils acquire the skills they need to write independently. Writing opportunities threaded through the whole curriculum ensure that writing is purposeful and never boring. The use of high-quality texts to stimulate writing is proving effective. Texts provide a useful resource for pupils, exposing them to a broader vocabulary and different sentence structures which they can then use in their own writing.
- Leaders ensure that first-hand experiences such as trips and visits are provided for every pupil so that they have something to write about. Work books show that by the end of Year 2 pupils develop the stamina to write at length using appropriate vocabulary. Over time, pupils develop an exceptional sense of purpose and understanding of the audience for their writing. Attainment and progress in writing continue to improve. The gaps between different pupil groups in each cohort, including those who are disadvantaged, are closing quickly.
- More pupils are now reaching the higher standards by the end of key stage 2 because teachers are providing greater challenge. Pupil expertise and skill are celebrated and encouraged. For example, Year 6 science ambassadors take great delight in engaging younger pupils in science experiments during the lunchbreak. However, teaching is not yet giving pupils enough opportunities for them to deepen their knowledge and understanding when they are required to learn independently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are supported to further develop their independent learning skills so that even more pupils across the school reach the higher standards
- all the statutory requirements of what must be published on a school website are met.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders. I held a discussion with two governors and met a group of staff to discuss their experience of working at the school. I scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and information about pupils' progress. I checked documents relating to safeguarding and looked at published information on the school's website.

Accompanied by you and other leaders, I made short visits to classrooms and spoke to pupils informally. I met a group of pupils to hear them read and talk about the school more formally. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I scrutinised their work books. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I considered 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I also considered the 70 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and the 49 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.