

Inspection of Atkinson Road Primary Academy

Atkinson Road, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE4 8XT

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Every day, staff work together with pupils at Atkinson Road to create a space where they feel safe and special. Pupils receive a warm, friendly welcome from the moment they arrive at school. Those new to the school, including pupils who arrive from overseas, quickly become part of this caring school family.

This highly inclusive and vibrant school embraces everyone within its diverse community. Pupils care about each other. They behave well and demonstrate respect for each other during work and play. Pupils listen carefully and consider each other's views and opinions in lessons. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to learn from their friends about their different religions and cultures. They feel this is one of the best things about their school. They say 'it is what our school is all about'. While pupils report that bullying can happen, adults quickly sort it and pupils trust staff to help them when they need it.

Pupils experience a rigorous and exciting curriculum. Leaders of the school and trust have high aspirations for all. Dedicated spaces for art, science, religious education and music teaching provide pupils with the opportunity to be immersed in their learning. The ambition for pupils' wider personal development is outstanding. Pupils access a vast array of opportunities beyond more formal lessons. Leaders have thought carefully about the exemplary experiences they provide for pupils to support them in developing their character, talents and interests.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Published outcomes for the school do not reflect the high quality of education provided at Atkinson Road. A significant proportion of pupils join and leave the school across any one school year. Many do not remain in the school long enough to benefit from the school's full curriculum. Despite this, leaders have put clear procedures in place to welcome pupils. Pupils who arrive from abroad, or with English as an additional language, access a carefully adapted curriculum offer. Adults understand the importance of finding out what pupils know and can remember as a priority on their arrival in school. Learning is then built from these various starting points. Leaders are working to further strengthen how checks on prior knowledge are used for all pupils across all subjects in the wider curriculum, so that all pupils are well supported to fully access the school's broad and aspirational curriculum.

Leaders seamlessly plan the school's curriculum from the provision for two-year-olds through to Year 6. Subject leaders work with staff to ensure that each subject is delivered as intended. Pupils experience a rich curriculum that develops their understanding and vocabulary from the earliest years of their education. Children in early years enjoy exciting topics and first-hand experiences. Staff offer appropriate support and challenge to all children to develop their language and understanding of the world. For example, children spent time hunting for snails in their outdoor area. This was to test out their hypothesis that 'snails lay eggs'.

Extensive training, investment and time have been given to develop early reading in school. All staff have been trained in how to deliver the school's chosen phonics scheme with consistency. Pupils read books which help them to practise the sounds they have been taught. Adults support pupils who may not have as many opportunities to read at home by providing extra practice in school. Many pupils join key stage 1 with little experience of phonics, or English. Staff quickly identify what pupils know and remember. They use this information to then provide personalised support to help pupils catch up over time. Older pupils develop a love of reading. They enjoy a wide selection of books by a range of authors. Pupils delight in the school's newly refurbished digital library.

The effective revisit and practice approach used in some subjects, such as English and early reading, is not as well embedded in all subjects. In mathematics, leaders have begun prioritising this approach to develop pupils' recall of important number facts. Pupils achieve well in subjects across the curriculum, such as geography and science. Teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to ensure that all pupils can access their lessons. The art curriculum is carefully planned so that pupils revisit previous concepts to deepen their understanding. Pupils enjoy learning about famous artists and are inspired to replicate their styles.

Provision for pupils in the school's additionally resourced provision (ARP) is excellent. Pupils make strong progress because the curriculum and provision are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within the mainstream classes well. Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum alongside their peers.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance across the school are good. Pupils value the opportunities that the school provides and do not want to miss them through absence from school or misbehaviour. After-school clubs are wide and varied, with excellent opportunities available to pupils such as archery, yoga and music clubs. School trips and extra-curricular events often include parents. This is a deliberate choice by leaders to support families, as well as pupils, in knowing about their community and region. Many pupils choose to attend school each Saturday morning to enjoy free masterclasses in activities such as ballet. Trust leaders drive this through the Laidlaw Foundation. This is a trust offer which funds much of the school's exceptional extra-curricular work. Leaders have developed a 'skills builder' programme as part of the approach to early careers education. Staff routinely provide opportunities for pupils to aim high, show teamwork, stay positive, lead, problem solve and be creative. Such opportunities develop pupils' lifelong ambitions and strength of character.

Trustees and local governors discharge their duties with skill, passion and care. They demonstrate a clear moral purpose, and their aspirations for excellence are well supported through strong trust leaders. Staff feel valued as part of a cohesive team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

From the trustee boardroom to the classroom, safeguarding is everyone's business at this school. All adults involved in the school are trained to identify when a pupil or family may need help or support. Staff and families value the visible designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) for their expertise and care. Leaders work well with outside agencies to keep pupils safe.

The nurturing ethos of the school allows pupils to be confident in speaking with all staff to share any worries or concerns. Staff know pupils and their families well. A school counsellor provides extra support for pupils when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In mathematics, pupils would benefit from further opportunities to practise and revisit important mathematical knowledge. Some pupils struggle to recall and apply what they have learned with automaticity. Leaders should continue their work to establish consistent, clear end points and check that pupils remember and can apply the knowledge needed to achieve these.
- Pupils' prior knowledge is not always systematically checked in preparation for the teaching of new content. Teachers are less clear about the most important content individual pupils need to learn. Leaders should continue to develop routine checks on learning in all subjects, to ensure that gaps in knowledge are identified and addressed more quickly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138212
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10255685
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	439
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susanna Kempe
Headteacher	Lisa Macaulay
Website	atkinsonroad.laidlaw.schoolstrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a significantly high proportion of pupil mobility.
- A high proportion of pupils within the school have English as an additional language, with many of these pupils arriving from overseas.
- A significant proportion of pupils attend school from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- The school has two ARPs for pupils with SEND. They cater for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs. The ARPs serve pupils from across the City of Newcastle.
- The school does not currently use any alternative education providers.
- The school provides a breakfast club for its pupils.
- The school is part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, geography and science. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum for early years.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENDCo, DSLs, early years lead, members of the local governing body and trust board, the trust's external school improvement advisor and representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and spoke to leaders, staff, local governing body and trust board members, and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits, at lunchtime, playtime and during a visit to the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, such as minutes of governance meetings, quality assurance reports and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors considered the responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. Inspectors met with staff to discuss their workload and well-being. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire, but inspectors spoke with various groups of pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Mark Dent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nichola Irving	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Connolly	Ofsted Inspector

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