

Inspection of a good school: Fatfield Academy

Southcroft, Fatfield, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE38 8RB

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 June 2024

The headteacher of this school is Nicky Dowdle. This school is part of Inspire Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Joanne West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steven Ruffell.

Outcome

Fatfield Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Fatfield Academy is a happy school. Pupils enjoy school. They particularly appreciate the opportunities they have to influence school decision-making, such as the range of after-school clubs provided. Pupils help to ensure the school day runs smoothly. They take pride in their many responsibilities. Pupils know that staff will listen to them. There are very warm, trusting and respectful relationships. Staff know individual pupils very well.

Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary both in lessons and in the playground. Pupils work well together. Staff encourage the youngest children to cooperate and work as a team. Any poor behaviour, including bullying, is rare. Staff deal with any instances of bullying promptly.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities, which promotes their personal development. Outdoor play is exciting and always changing. For example, pupils make clay sculptures in the forest. They play team games, swing from a tyre or splash in the water and play with their friends. A wide-ranging careers programme helps pupils to learn about the world of work.

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Tasks are demanding. Pupils present their work to a good standard. They achieve well in mathematics and become keen, fluent readers.

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

The school is reviewing how effective the curriculum is. The teaching of reading has been revised and strengthened. Pupils now become confident, fluent readers more rapidly. Staff teach reading well. They introduce new sounds at the right time and provide pupils with plenty of practice. Staff intervene quickly if any pupil is in danger of falling behind. Pupils who struggle with reading receive precise, targeted support.

The school is ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know pupils well. They provide the right support, so pupils learn alongside their classmates. Staff give extra guidance or helpful resources so that pupils with SEND gain new knowledge.

Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Teachers explain and demonstrate new mathematical learning skilfully. New learning builds up in small, manageable steps. Teachers ask questions to probe pupils' understanding. They take prompt action when misconceptions arise.

In history, pupils' knowledge is not as secure. Pupils confuse different periods in history. They struggle to explain the importance of some events. This is because the curriculum is not clearly mapped out in order to help pupils' knowledge build logically. At times, pupils undertake activities that do not help them to deepen their historical knowledge. The school knows that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. Recent changes to address these gaps have not yet made a difference.

Children quickly gain confidence and independence in the early years. They follow routines, such as tidy-up times, diligently. Staff encourage children to persevere when tasks are tricky. Staff provide the right level of support, so children succeed. Sensitive questioning helps deepen children's knowledge. Children visit the forest, beach and local area regularly. Carefully planned activities help to enhance their knowledge of the natural world.

The school is calm and purposeful. Outdoor play is vibrant. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being. Most pupils attend school regularly. Rigorous procedures to follow up absence have been successful in reducing the number of pupils with high levels of absence.

Pupils' personal development is extremely well supported. For example, the programme of nights away increases pupils' resilience year on year. The school uses local businesses and services well to enrich the curriculum. Pupils learn about a very wide range of jobs from quantity surveyor to tattoo artist. Regular projects support pupils to develop their knowledge of engineering. After-school clubs mirror pupils' interests. Other initiatives support pupils' self-esteem and encourage good behaviour.

The trust and the local governing body have supported a smooth transition for the new leadership team. Staff are supportive of leaders' work to reduce their workload. Subject leaders are supported to fulfil their role effectively. Staff appreciate leaders' investment in their professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The history curriculum does not sequence what should be taught and when clearly enough. There is insufficient guidance to develop pupils' disciplinary knowledge. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge well over time. The school should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects identifies clearly the order in which both substantive and disciplinary knowledge should be taught. The school should ensure that teachers are given the support they need to deliver the curriculum well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2019

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school

meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142997
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10323080
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steven Ruffell
Headteacher	Nicky Dowdle
Website	www.fatfieldacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The leadership team, including the headteacher, are all new to post this academic year.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the CEO of the trust, trustees, members of the local governing body and spoke to an external consultant on the telephone.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. In doing so, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed the curriculum in the early years as well as the curriculum for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also considered responses to the online staff survey. The inspector sought pupils' views throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024