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Miss Toni Spoors
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Dear Miss Spoors

Short inspection of Easington Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016 with Melanie Williams, Ofsted Inspector, 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 converted to academy status in April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has sustained the good quality of education in the academy since the last inspection. A strong, well-communicated determination to provide high-quality education and promote the well-being of all pupils characterises the work of governors, leaders and staff.

Your vision and ambition for your pupils are reflected in the day-to-day work of senior and middle leaders, who all know and pursue the priorities you have identified to improve outcomes for pupils further. As a result, staff are motivated and committed to their work with pupils.

The well-being and personal development of pupils are a cornerstone of the school's work. They underpin the drive to ensure that pupils achieve well. As a consequence, pupils show respect for each other and staff, behave well and apply themselves to their learning. Pupils enjoy their time at the school, and feel safe and well cared for.

Those pupils and parents with whom inspectors talked were very positive about the school. Parents were keen to tell inspectors about the way staff at the school made them feel welcome, and parents are confident that staff will always help them if they have a concern. This feedback included parents of pupils who had only recently started at the school. Parents who completed Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) held similarly positive views. Parents said that they can always get a swift response

from the school if they have a query or a worry. Parents liked the high expectations staff have of pupils' behaviour. Parents appreciated the time staff gave them to learn about different subjects, for example in visits to the art department.

The leadership team has well-developed processes to analyse information about pupils' progress. It has analysed examination performance and information about pupils' achievement in each year group, observed teaching and learning, and checked pupils' work in books. As a consequence, leaders have a firm grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

Leaders have used the information they have gathered from monitoring to identify key strategies to improve teaching and the progress pupils make. They have made it a priority for all teachers to develop their questioning skills further, and to plan learning that matches pupils' learning needs with greater precision. This is accelerating pupils' progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics. So far, improvement is greatest in Key Stage 3. The gap in achievement in mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and others has closed rapidly in Year 7 and is closing too at Key Stage 4, but a little more slowly.

Leaders have put in place a programme of staff development to sharpen teachers' questioning skills and improve the way they plan challenging activities for learners. The school's current information about pupils' progress shows that a greater proportion of the most-able pupils are making better than expected progress than in the past. However, this improvement is not consistent across all subjects in all years. There is further to go.

The leadership team has led focused work to improve the quality of advice teachers give to pupils in written feedback. In many cases, pupils are given clear and precise advice to move their learning forward. Pupils have responded well to this system and understand how it helps them improve their learning. Work in pupils' books shows that this practice is having a positive impact, but is not being used consistently by all staff.

The school has maintained high levels of attainment over a number of years. Attainment is well above national averages. The school's current focus on improving the progress made by boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able is leading to better achievement overall. A very high proportion of pupils make expected progress in English by the time they leave school. Leaders know that further work is needed to increase the proportion of pupils making expected and better than expected progress in mathematics to the same level. The improvements seen have to be sustained and developed over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and to safeguard them are up to date and effective. All the required checks to ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils are carried out and carefully recorded. The school's policies and practices are of high quality. They are known and understood

by staff and governors. Training for governors and staff is up to date. As a result, they have a good understanding of the risks that pupils face. Staff know what to do if there are any concerns. Safeguarding leaders take effective actions when pupils are at risk or may be vulnerable. They liaise well with external agencies and teams to keep pupils safe. Staff make sure that pupils know about bullying. The school's insistence on good standards of behaviour and the readiness of pupils to behave well and respect others contribute to their safety. Overall, attendance is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is lower than the national average overall. Leaders and home-school liaison staff have worked successfully to improve attendance and reduce any instances of persistent absence, particularly among disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are determined to pursue this work to improve attendance further. Pupils say the school keeps them safe and cares for them well. Parents who spoke with inspectors agree wholeheartedly.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have put in place rigorous procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make. They have made effective use of the information they gather to identify accurately the improvements needed and put strategies in place to address them. For example, leaders saw that teachers needed to provide more challenge for pupils of different abilities to improve learning, so they put training in place for teachers to help them do so. As a result, more pupils, in groups that have not made as much progress as others in the past, are now making or exceeding expected progress.
- Leaders identified that teachers' written feedback to pupils could be more effective, so that pupils know what to do to improve their work. As a result, leaders have reviewed the way advice on how pupils should improve their work is given and have made their expectations clear to all staff. This has led to regular marking, and increasingly effective comments and advice from teachers. Pupils say that they appreciate the feedback they receive.
- The outcome of the school's focus on improving challenge for pupils of all abilities and using questions, not just to check pupils' knowledge but also deepen their understanding, are leading to good progress for most pupils. For example, high-quality questioning in a music lesson on rhythm enabled pupils to evaluate their learning and see how it fitted into the next phase of the project on African music. Where high-quality questioning was seen, for example in a German lesson in Key Stage 4, expert subject knowledge shaped questions, which rapidly improved pupils' skills and understanding in using the past tense. The gaps in the achievement of boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils compared with others are closing as a result.
- There has been rapid improvement in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 3. However, the pace of improvement at Key Stage 4 needs to accelerate further.

- Observations and scrutiny of pupils' work showed that, on a few occasions, activities did not extend learning as well as they could, and pupils could have been moved on faster.
- Pastoral leaders are effective in ensuring that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. Parents confirm that they are confident that the school is inclusive and responsive to their children's needs. Leaders are placing a strong emphasis on improving the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent. Quite properly, this is a priority which helps keep pupils safe. The impact has been an improved overall attendance rate so far this year. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs or disability is improving rapidly. Leaders are determined to drive down persistent absence figures yet further.
- Governors have a clear view of the key priorities for the school. They know what needs to be done to improve the school further and check with senior leaders that appropriate steps are being taken. Governors are improving the rigour with which they check the impact of actions with senior leaders. Governors are beginning to check the effectiveness of the work that middle leaders do with their teams. Governors are all trained to fulfil their duties to safeguard children effectively. A recently conducted skills audit is another example of governors' monitoring to inform actions to sustain their effectiveness over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should sharpen further their actions to ensure that:

- the progress of boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, accelerates further
- all teachers have even higher expectations of pupils' achievement, so that pupils make more rapid progress from their starting points
- all teachers consistently use questions that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Chris Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held discussions with you, your deputy headteacher and other leaders to consider the school's work and the impact of your strategies for improvement. Inspectors also discussed the school's work with the Chair of the Governing Body and the lead governor for safeguarding to see how well governors support and challenge leaders. Inspectors visited 20 lessons, and you and your deputy headteacher joined inspectors for 10 of those visits. A sample of pupils' books was reviewed to consider the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Inspectors also talked with pupils and a small group of parents to find out their views about the school. Inspectors took into account the responses of a small number of parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors reviewed, among other documents, the school's improvement plan, its policies for safeguarding and behaviour and assessment information about its pupils.