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Mrs Sandy Thorpe
Headteacher
Whinney Banks Primary School
Fakenham Avenue
Whinney Banks
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Dear Mrs Thorpe

Short inspection of Whinney Banks Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 October 2015 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your recently strengthened leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and teachers ensure that the majority of pupils, whatever their starting points, make good progress and those who need to catch up do so quickly. Staff regularly review how well pupils are doing, and effective support from both teachers and teaching assistants is used to rapidly tackle any emerging gaps in learning. Over the last three years, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have steadily improved at Key Stages 1 and 2.

The school is a welcoming, calm and creative place. Pupils settle quickly to work and enjoy their lessons and learning. At playtimes pupils socialise well together. They are happy at school, and say that bullying is very rare and that any issues are resolved quickly by adults. Parents and pupils who spoke informally to me were very positive about the work of the school. The large number of staff who returned the questionnaire were unanimous in praising the support they receive from school leaders.

Inspectors identified one area for improvement at the last inspection; to give pupils more detailed feedback on the quality of their work. The high-quality marking I observed in pupils' books, with opportunities for pupils to reflect on and improve their work, shows that the school has clearly acted on this.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted that pupils were exceptionally well behaved, respectful and polite. The report also highlighted the high aspirations of

leaders and teachers for pupils. These strengths remain and the work and commitment of the leadership team demonstrate a good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that records are detailed and of high quality. All staff receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe. Records indicate that staff work closely with families and other agencies to ensure the safety of pupils. There is a calm and purposeful working environment throughout the school which has a positive impact on pupils' conduct and their understanding and tolerance of others. The pupils I met said that they feel safe in school, know how to keep themselves safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics across all key stages. The school has clearly understood and put effective systems in place for checking on pupils' progress, in order to identify any individuals or groups who need extra help. Teaching assistants provide high-quality support in class and a number of very effective intervention groups provide additional support where required. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to teaching and learning because they are very clear about what the teacher wants them to do and why.
- The proportion of boys in early years achieving a good level of development is low but increased in 2015 as a result of changes to the curriculum and more effective teaching. This achievement gap for boys, compared with girls, narrows at Key Stage 1 and has closed by the end of Key Stage 2. The achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils is small throughout the school due to the effective support these pupils receive. By the end of Year 6, the standards pupils and groups of pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics mean that they are well prepared to make the most of their secondary education.
- The quality of teaching is consistently strong throughout the school. Observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils, and plan lessons and activities to engage and fully enthuse their pupils in all aspects of learning. The recent development of the outdoor classroom has provided an additional environment to further enrich learning.
- The school curriculum has been carefully redesigned to give a broad and challenging education. Pupils say they enjoy their work and the support they receive from adults. They like having time in lessons to review and respond to teachers' comments on completed tasks in order to raise the quality of their work. The relationships between teachers and pupils are of the highest quality and pupils throughout the school display very positive attitudes to their work.

- The school's website has weaknesses in the range and type of information provided about the school's provision and outcomes for different groups of pupils. At present, there is no analysis of the impact of additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils and as part of the government's physical education and school sport initiative. This means that parents are not as well informed as they could be if they wish to find out about the school online.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and detailed and based on a thorough analysis of data and other relevant information. It identifies the correct priorities for the next stage of the school's development. Governors know the school well. They hold senior leaders to account and have ensured that recent changes to leadership and teaching have not disrupted the development of the school and the improving progress of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the achievement of pupils, and in particular boys, improves in the early years, and in Key Stage 1 continues to improve to match that seen nationally
- the school's website is fully up to date and compliant with statutory requirements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Middlesbrough local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During this inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the early years leader, five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative from the local authority. I examined a range of documentation relating to school improvement, pupil progress, attendance, exclusion and the safeguarding of pupils. I visited the majority of classrooms, along with a senior leader, to observe learning, to talk with pupils and to consider the progress made by pupils in their books. I considered 46 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider, but I was able to examine responses to the school's written questionnaire for parents.