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Simon King
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Dear Mr King

Short inspection of Dundale Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 22 September 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You have joined an effective leadership team. Your good communication with previous leaders and parents has paved the way for further improvement. Effective oversight by the governing body has ensured successful school leadership and a continuous drive for improvement during this period of leadership change.

The positive climate for learning is fully reflected in the vibrant and informative displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. Pupils like coming to school because teachers work hard to make learning enjoyable. They provide a wide range of opportunities, in and beyond the classroom, for pupils to develop wider skills and interests with their friends.

Leaders and staff set clear expectations, so that pupils behave well and develop respect and consideration for others. This is reflected in how all pupils relate to each other and to adults within the school.

One strength of the school is the strategic vision of governors and leaders on their journey to make the school outstanding. Priorities are clear for all to see and effective procedures support rigorous self-evaluation. The governing body makes good use of these procedures to monitor the progress made on each of the priorities for action.

There is clear evidence that issues from the last inspection, particularly the elimination of inconsistencies in teaching and learning, have been tackled with determination. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly by senior leaders to eliminate weaker performance. Effective use is made of visits to outstanding schools to develop teachers' skills and expertise.

The redesign of the curriculum has enthused pupils about their learning. Teachers link themes between different subjects to further develop essential skills taught in English and mathematics lessons. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils wrote imaginatively about the Vikings while developing their grammar skills as part of their new topic. Pupils say this way of learning is exciting and very motivating. As a result, they make good progress in writing in other subjects, such as science and history.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders implement robust procedures with rigour to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils at the school. Recent training for all staff and governors ensures that the safeguarding of pupils is at the forefront of what they do. Teachers make good use of this training to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and records are detailed and of high quality. Any issues related to child protection are followed through quickly with the appropriate agencies. The needs of the most vulnerable pupils are monitored through careful and discreet management.

Inspection findings

- Thorough and regular self-evaluation is used well to implement further improvement. For instance, senior leaders and governors review improvement plan priorities regularly to measure progress against action points. This progress is recorded effectively within the improvement plan to provide a visual measure of the progress made towards identified targets. Individual governors allocated to each class undertake regular visits to work with teachers and pupils. They report their findings formally back to the full governing body.
- Senior leaders use the findings of regular monitoring of teaching and learning in classrooms to identify areas for improvement and inform individual development plans to eliminate weaknesses in teaching. Observations I made during the monitoring inspection confirm that this targeted support has been effective in the improvement of teaching within the school and especially so in Key Stage 2. However, some minor aspects of teaching still require improvement, such as ensuring that learning for pupils has a clear purpose in all lessons.

- Pupils in Year 6 make good progress from their broadly average starting points in Year 1. A recent trend of improvement in standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has turned around a previous dip in performance. Standards are now broadly average overall and above average in writing. Improvements in the early years provision ensure that a larger proportion of children enter Year 1 with a good level of development compared to previous years.
- Standards in writing are above expectations in Year 6. Girls continue to perform better than boys in writing but gaps in their achievement are narrowing, mainly because boys are increasingly motivated about their work and especially proud of their writing. They are keen to talk about the exciting topics that they have covered in their writing books, such as outer space and the Mayan people.
- Strategies to narrow gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are successful. This is particularly so in the Nursery and Reception classes. The analysis of information in the other classes confirms that disadvantaged pupils make better progress than other pupils in the school and also similar pupils nationally. Small-group sessions and individual support are used well to increase the progress rates for these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Observations made during the last monitoring visit confirm that teachers in all classes fully involve pupils in practical learning experiences and small-group discussions. They use questions well to probe pupils' understanding and make them think more deeply about what is being discussed. These activities support pupils' good progress in speaking and listening.
- Teachers make good use of computers and technology to both illustrate key teaching points and enable pupils to undertake their own research as part of their learning. For instance, pupils in Year 5 searched the internet to discover a wealth of information about the Vikings; this information was then used well to inform their use of adverbs in their next writing task.
- Marking by all teachers is of high quality. Pupils value the comments written by their teacher in their books because they then know exactly what to do next to improve. A review of their books confirms this marking contributes effectively to the good progress pupils make. However, some pupils are still prone to make simple errors in their spelling and grammar which are left unchallenged by teachers; this is especially so in Years 3 and 4.
- Much work has been undertaken by teachers since the previous inspection to provide all pupils with a curriculum that meets their needs and interests well. Teachers carefully check each topic against the programmes of study for each subject in the new National Curriculum to ensure that the topics are broad and balanced.

- As a result of this creative planning, pupils are able to make connections between different aspects of the topic being studied. This gives relevance to their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils talked at length about exciting projects from the previous term, such as those related to outer space and Shakespeare. Trips to the Globe Theatre bring this learning to life for pupils. Pupils are keen to learn and behaviour is good as a result. These positive characteristics are reflected by the many positive views of parents.
- Themed weeks provide further levels of enrichment. All children in the early years and pupils in Key Stage 1 participate on a weekly basis in practical learning experiences, such as making shelters and looking at nature within the extensive school grounds.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is used well to support the teaching of physical education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- by the end of Year 6, standards in reading and mathematics match those in writing
- teachers correct basic errors to improve pupils' spelling and accurate use of punctuation in their writing
- all teachers accelerate pupils' achievement in their lessons by using time and resources highly effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and the consolidation of skills.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and jointly observed teaching and learning in all classes with senior leaders. Further meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher, and the subject leader for English, the Chair of the Governing Body and a community governor. The school's safeguarding arrangements were examined closely. Discussions were also held with a group of pupils from Year 6 about their work in Year 5. The inspector met with some parents and reviewed 28 responses on Ofsted's survey Parent View.