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Mr David Waites
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Waites

Short inspection of East Ward Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 2016, 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have built on the work of the previous headteacher to keep teaching vibrant and raise the achievement of pupils. You, and all staff, have created a nurturing and purposeful atmosphere that helps pupils to learn, and promotes their all-round development and well-being very effectively. In the words of pupils, 'Our school is welcoming, caring and safe; learning is interesting and fun.'

Pupils feel a sense of belonging and show great pride in their school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils from many different backgrounds work and play together happily. They learn a lot from each other, growing in their understanding of and respect for different faiths and cultures. For example, your 'language of the month' initiative helps pupils to communicate in the 25 languages spoken in school and learn about different countries.

There is strong teamwork among staff, leaders and governors, focusing on continuous improvement. Staff and parents are confident in your leadership and that of the acting deputy headteacher. You provide good opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership skills through the 'Curriculum Teams', where they can share ideas and expertise. Comments from staff, such as 'I am empowered to be creative and innovative in helping the school to continually move forward' and 'all staff work as a team, supporting each other and pulling together to make sure the children and their learning are put first' are typical and reflect the school's work accurately. Governors have high ambition for pupils and support improvement effectively. They have been instrumental in building positive relationships with the community and increasing the popularity of the school.

The areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection have been tackled effectively. The development of reading skills in the early stages has been a focus and, as a result, pupils' achievement in reading in the end of Year 2 national assessments has risen and was above average in 2015. Parents of children in the early years are now well informed about how to support their children's learning at home. Parents spoke very positively about the many initiatives, including the 'stay and play' sessions, where they can observe their children learning. The various workshops, for example in developing language, mathematical and phonics skills (the sounds that letters make), are well attended because they are informative and enjoyable.

You are continuing to work on a small number of improvements. As well as making sure that pupils make good or better progress from their starting points, you are also striving to increase the proportion of pupils who reach at least age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group. This is a challenge, as some pupils have limited experiences on starting school and some are in the early stages of learning English. However, all staff are rising to this challenge. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development in the early years has improved over the last three years, reflecting improvement in the school's Nursery provision. Teachers are aware of the need to help children make even more rapid progress in the Reception classes in order to bring their achievement in line with the national average. Pupils' writing remains a focus for improvement in each year group, especially in helping pupils to develop effective spelling strategies.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many parents were keen to share their opinions, stating for example: 'This is a great school with dedicated, friendly and approachable staff who are always available when needed. Any issues are dealt with and you are always kept informed of what is happening. It's an extremely diverse school, which makes sure all pupils and parents feel welcome and included.' This inspection endorses such views.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are highly effective procedures to safeguard pupils, and they make a strong contribution to pupils' personal, social and emotional development. You keep detailed records of behaviour or incidents requiring intervention and follow them up effectively. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for, behaviour is usually very good and they do not feel threatened by bullying in school. Their views are reflected by parents: all of those responding to Parent View (the online questionnaire), and those who spoke to me, feel that their children are happy, feel safe and well looked after. Comments such as 'staff are all kind, caring and understanding' and 'if I have ever had questions or concerns they have always been dealt with straight away' are typical.

Parents and pupils feel that behaviour is managed well, and that bullying, if it does occur, is dealt with fairly and appropriately. Procedures to ensure safe recruitment of staff, manage risk and maintain the safety of the school are extremely thorough and meet statutory requirements. All staff are aware of safeguarding procedures and you have ensured that training and policies are up to date. You have undertaken training

in the government's Prevent strategy to help safeguard pupils from potential extremism and have appropriate plans to disseminate this more widely to staff and governors.

Pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are provided with quality advice and support to help them manage challenges, keep children safe and help them achieve well at school. Effective links with outside agencies help to create supportive 'teams around the child'. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and families who struggle with attendance receive good support. Attendance has improved and was similar to the national average in 2015.

Inspection findings

- The new leadership team is continuing to improve the school. You have an accurate view of performance and have identified appropriate priorities for further improvement. Although current senior leadership arrangements are temporary, there are appropriate plans to ensure a substantive headteacher is appointed as soon as possible.
- Strong teamwork, shared vision and high ambitions for pupils are at the heart of the continued success of the school. Leadership at all levels is developed effectively. Staff are able to make a full contribution through the shared leadership arrangements, which ensure that expertise is used effectively.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the harmonious atmosphere through their behaviour, which is often exemplary, and their positive attitudes. Many take on roles as councillors, peer mediators and digital leaders (who use their skills to check all the tablets and laptops in school). They take their responsibilities seriously and are proud of their achievements.
- There are a few pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour, but pupils say the odd incidents are managed well and dealt with fairly. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and know who to turn to if they ever feel threatened.
- Teaching has continued to improve due to good quality professional development and effective planning to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants encourage and support pupils thoughtfully, so pupils grow in confidence and learn the skills they need to succeed. Pupils say, for example, that 'Teachers always help you understand and give you extra help if you get stuck.'
- Teachers invest time and energy in planning interesting and exciting experiences for pupils. For example, the recent visit of a 'dinosaur' to the school has captured the imagination of pupils of all ages and resulted in enthusiastic learning in several subjects. The teaching of phonics, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now interactive and pacy. It successfully develops pupils' ability to read and write words in the early stages.
- Children make good progress in the early years, often from lower starting points than those that are usual for children their age, especially in language and literacy. Children make very good progress in their personal and social

development, which provides them with strong foundations for further learning. They settle happily because they feel safe and are provided with purposeful learning activities. Teachers in the early years are aware that they need to continue to build on these skills as children progress from the Nursery to the Reception class so that more children reach a good level of development.

- Teaching is organised well to meet the wide range of abilities and learning needs in each class. As a result, all groups of pupils make equally good progress. In 2015, pupils achieved standards that were above average at the end of Year 2 and were broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils have many opportunities to enrich their learning, for example in before and after school clubs, visits and homework. A few pupils and parents say that they would like homework to be more challenging, however.
- The pupil premium, which is additional funding provided to the school to support disadvantaged pupils, is used effectively. Disadvantaged pupils made better progress than other pupils nationally from their starting points in all subjects in 2015.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are supported well, so that they experience success and develop skills to support further learning. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also supported effectively to learn English and they make rapid gains in their learning. Those who join the school at times other than the usual time make friends quickly because staff and pupils go out of their way to welcome them.
- The school improvement partner provides good challenge and support to the school.
- The governing body has high ambitions for the pupils and the school. Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and challenges and support leaders effectively. They ensure that staff receive appropriate professional development so that they can continue to develop and improve their skills. The Chair's view that 'Our children deserve the absolute best... and a bit more' is endorsed by all.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- children's progress in the early years continues to quicken, building on the improvements in the school's Nursery provision in the last few years, so that more children reach a good level of development
- teaching supports pupils to develop effective spelling strategies.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, and seven members of the governing body, including the Chair. I had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. I spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons and met with several pupils to talk about their views of the school. I spoke with 15 parents at the start of the school day and took account of 14 responses to Parent View. I took account of 15 staff responses and 27 pupil responses to the online questionnaire. I visited several classes during lessons, including the early years, Year 2 and Year 6 and observed phonics teaching. I looked at pupils' writing and mathematics books in each class visited. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and at your monitoring of teaching, self-evaluation and action planning. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, training, safeguarding checks and record keeping.