

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



2 February 2016

Mrs Karen Bennett
Headteacher
Etherley Lane Primary School
Clarence Gardens
Etherley Lane
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
DL14 7RB

Dear Mrs Bennett

Short inspection of Etherley Lane 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and staff work closely as a team and, together with governors, share a strong sense of purpose, which is leading to improvements in the school. All are determined to ensure that pupils do as well as they can.

Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. The most-able pupils are now making good progress as they receive challenging work which enables them to think more deeply. Improvements in the early years are ensuring that more children reach the expected level for their age. Children are developing their early writing and number skills well.

Pupils show great tolerance and respect to those of faiths and backgrounds different to their own. They value their relationships with their pen pals in London and Nepal and showed great empathy about the plight of their friends following the earthquake in Nepal. They are proud of their school and value the opportunities that they have to take on responsibilities, such as conserving energy or acting as buddies, with older pupils helping the younger ones.

You, other leaders and governors are ambitious for the school to become outstanding, but recognise that further work needs to be done to achieve this. You have been proactive in requesting the local authority to conduct a review of the impact of additional funding on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In the past, the

support provided for these pupils was not making enough of a difference and gaps in pupils' attainment were not closing quickly enough. You and your leaders have now taken decisive action to address this and are checking rigorously on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You are now targeting support more effectively to ensure that these pupils achieve as well as their classmates. The impact of this is beginning to be seen in pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. Regular training, alongside effective systems and procedures, ensure that staff and governors have a raised awareness of any risks to pupils' well-being and take prompt action to protect pupils, where necessary. High priority is given to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. This was confirmed by pupils who said that the school arranged visits from the police to warn them about 'stranger danger' and that staff teach them to be alert to any possible dangers when using the internet. Responses from parents and carers also indicated that they were confident that their children are kept safe. Parents and pupils I spoke to during the inspection confirmed that all leaders and staff are approachable and that they would have no hesitation in seeking help if they had a worry or concern. The school works closely with a wide range of agencies to gain support for children and their families. The support of the family liaison worker, leaders and staff is greatly valued by parents and carers.

Inspection findings

- The effective leadership of teaching and assessment is helping to improve pupils' learning. Leaders have taken firm action to address weaker teaching and to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is evident in pupils' books, which indicate that pupils respond well to teachers' advice and try hard to improve their work. Pupils take great pride in their work and older pupils sign a 'pledge' at the beginning of the school year, agreeing that they will always try to produce work to the best of their ability.
- The school's curriculum has been reviewed and provides a good range of interesting and stimulating activities. Topics in science, history and geography are capturing pupils' imagination, for example when learning about Ancient Egypt and making a visit to a local museum to see a range of artefacts, including a 'mummy'. Tolerance and respect for others and an understanding of democracy are promoted well through the curriculum and, as a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils relish the opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and learning to play a musical instrument.
- There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum in the early years. The early years leader has made sure that children have access to a range of enjoyable activities which challenge them to think hard about their learning. This was shown in a mathematics activity where the teacher asked probing questions to extend children's skills in counting. Children are also taught a correct pencil grip and how to form

letters and numbers correctly. They are making good progress in learning phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and this is evident in their writing. As a result, children are making better progress and more children are reaching the expected level for their age. Systems to record children's achievements are effective, although it is not always made clear to parents exactly what the child's 'next steps' in learning would be, so that they can help their child move forward.

- Evidence in pupils' books and assessment records show that pupils are making good progress across the school. The results of the Year 1 phonics check rose to above the national average in 2015 and it is evident that pupils are using their phonics skills well to help them in their reading and writing. National published results for Key Stage 1 in 2015 were broadly average and showed good progress from these pupils' starting points. Leaders have ensured that there are good opportunities for pupils to engage in reasoning and problem-solving activities in mathematics, and pupils are able to think more deeply about the concepts they are learning. There is also evidence in pupils' work to show that there are good opportunities for pupils to engage in science experiments and carry out 'fair tests' to explore their hypotheses. Pupils are making good progress in their writing and there is a clear focus on improving their spelling, grammar and punctuation as well as the presentation of their work. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects in the curriculum. Consequently, pupils make good progress across Key Stage 2 and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Effective involvement in a road safety project is ensuring that pupils are highly aware of how to keep themselves safe. Their newspaper, 'The Etherley Lane Safety Echo', reports on the 'walking school bus' and the implementation of a 20 miles per hour speed limit in the area surrounding the school. This newspaper has been shared with the local community. Rates of attendance are improving because leaders are taking rigorous action to tackle any persistent absence. Parents receive weekly newsletters containing information on attendance rates and rewards are given to those pupils who attend well. Pupils behave well and are courteous and polite to adults and to one another. There has been a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents and there have been no exclusions this academic year.
- There are strengths in the leadership of the school. School self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders use assessment information well to identify any areas of underachievement and take successful steps to tackle it. The school development plan contains appropriate priorities and all leaders and staff contribute action plans in the areas for which they are responsible. However, the plan is not as tightly focused as it could be and there are not always precise targets and milestones by which success can be measured accurately.
- Governance is effective. Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school and make regular visits to see for themselves how well pupils are learning. They provide effective challenge to school leaders and are actively involved in the work of the school. They give a strong steer in the strategic development of the school and ensure that their statutory duties are met, particularly in respect of safeguarding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school development plan is improved by including precise targets and milestones by which success can be measured
- parents are informed of precise 'next steps' in learning for their children in the early years so that they can help their child learn
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils accelerates so that they achieve at least the standards reached by their classmates.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Durham County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of subject and other leaders. I also held meetings with members of the governing body, a group of pupils, seven parents and carers and a representative of the local authority. You, the deputy headteacher and I visited a number of classrooms to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, talk to pupils and look at their work. We discussed rates of pupils' progress, your current school self-evaluation and your school improvement plan. I evaluated a range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, the headteacher's reports to governors, your records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and information on attendance, exclusions and safeguarding. I considered the 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire. Pupil questionnaires were not completed as part of this inspection.