

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



7 April 2016

Mrs Sally Collingwood  
Headteacher  
Diamond Hall Infant Academy  
Well Street  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR4 6JF

Dear Mrs Collingwood

### **Short inspection of Diamond Hall Infant Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You communicate an unwavering determination to provide the very best education for every pupil and your leadership team shares this ambition. A culture of professional challenge, where staff and other leaders feel well supported to achieve their best, enables you and your team to continuously reflect on what is working well and where further improvement is needed. As a result, the quality of teaching is good and, year on year, a greater proportion of pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age.

You have the respect of staff, pupils and parents alike because you understand the complexities of the community in which you work. You lead by example and are a constant champion for those pupils and families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable or who are less fortunate than others. Your mission to 'ensure every child succeeds and meets the challenges of an ever-changing world,' is borne out in your day-to-day curriculum where pupils from different backgrounds and religions are encouraged to be tolerant, respectful and understanding of each other's views and beliefs. This ready acceptance of difference creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere where pupils can work alongside their friends harmoniously and focus on their learning.

Leaders are open and honest about their strengths and areas for development. You leave no stone unturned and, together, show no glimmer of complacency. Effective teamwork, regular reflection on what is working well, and the seeking of timely

external scrutiny and support are central to the school's success. Leaders are unafraid to tackle weaknesses head-on so that the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes remain consistently good over time.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with improving the quality of pupils' writing and ensuring that pupils understood how to improve their work. You and your team have addressed these areas for improvement successfully. Pupils now write more frequently and at greater length. They told me they enjoy their writing most when it is linked to an exciting text or a topic they have been studying in another lesson. Your insistence on the use of a number of strategies, which you have deemed your 'six to fix', are embedding into everyday practice effectively. For example, the use of visual images, drama and plentiful opportunities to talk are supporting the large number of pupils with English as an additional language to write more confidently and with greater understanding. As a result, they acquire new language quickly and achieve as well as their peers by the time they leave the school.

You rightly recognise that you cannot achieve continued success on your own. Where you have identified that aspects of the school's work do not show the same strengthening picture over time, such as pupils' attendance, you have delegated responsibility to a wider team. Year group leaders, and the recently appointed well-being lead, now hold greater accountability for raising the profile and importance of regular attendance with parents and pupils. While more still needs to be done to reduce absence so that it is at least in line with that found nationally, it is beginning to move in the right direction.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Protecting pupils and their families from potential harm is a cornerstone of the school's work. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Regular audits of key systems and processes, and their effectiveness in keeping pupils safe, ensure that the school continually adjusts its policies and practice to keep abreast of recent legislation and good practice. Staff attend update training regularly so that they are vigilant and mindful of the potential dangers to pupils. Your close links and proactive work with other agencies, such as the police and health professionals, ensure that referrals for more specialist support are managed well. Absence, while above average, is followed up quickly. Leaders are dogmatic in pursuing children and families who go missing from school until they can assure themselves that they are safe and on roll elsewhere.

Pupils have a strong awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations because your 'protective curriculum' explores the full gamut of risks and dangers to which pupils may be exposed. You have cultivated a strong sense of belonging among pupils in a multicultural and multifaith community. Teaching pupils about the values of respect, tolerance and open acceptance is at the core of the school's work. You and your team have created a culture where difference, in whatever form it may take, does not detract from pupils' learning and play.

## Inspection findings

- The headteacher is driven by a strong moral purpose to improve the life chances and educational outcomes for all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. Concerted action over time has meant that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language has risen considerably. It is now close to matching that of other pupils within the school and nationally.
- Provision for two-year-olds is developing well. Staff rightly focus on securing children's language, communication and personal skills, such as their confidence to interact and engage with others, so that they are ready to learn when they move into the Nursery class.
- Effective systems are in place to continually review the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. Opportunities to engage in professional dialogue and focused training sessions, including with other schools, has ensured that staff keep on top of their game. As such, the quality of teaching remains consistently strong.
- Teachers have high expectations for what most of their pupils can achieve. Staff are particularly successful at identifying the gaps in knowledge among least-able pupils and designing activities to enable them to catch up quickly. Staff show less understanding about meeting the needs of the most-able pupils so that this group sometimes go unchallenged by their learning. Leaders are aware that they need to give more attention to the most able so that they can reach their full potential and exceed what is expected for their age.
- Pupils' absence rates, although improving, remain high. Leaders have begun to raise the profile of good attendance and time keeping among pupils and parents, including instilling good habits in the early years, but there remains some way to go in winning over the hearts and minds of all parents.
- Middle leaders are keen to make a difference in their year groups. They take an active role in monitoring the work of their teams and formulating action plans to address identified weaknesses. Effective communication between leaders has ensured a consistent approach to teaching across the school.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Members of the challenge committee, in particular, ask highly pertinent questions of senior and middle leaders because they understand the assessment information presented to them. Governors agree that clearer targets and timescales in the school's improvement plan would help them to monitor leaders' work even more robustly.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most-able pupils are challenged in their learning so that they reach their full potential and exceed what is expected for their age
- attendance rises quickly so that it at least matches the national average
- improvement planning includes clearly measurable targets and timescales so that leaders, especially governors, know whether agreed actions are making as big a difference to pupils' outcomes as anticipated.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, four middle leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a group of Year 2 pupils. You accompanied me on my visits to each classroom to observe teaching and talk to pupils informally about their learning and experiences of school. Together with the deputy headteacher, we evaluated the current standard of writing in pupils' books. I scrutinised a range of other documentation about the work of the school, including your self-evaluation, improvement planning and recent information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also examined documents relating to attendance and the safeguarding of pupils. I considered the eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 13 responses received from staff.