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29 April 2016

Mrs Diane Scott
Headteacher
Thomas Bewick School
Linhope Road
West Denton
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE5 2LW

Dear Mrs Scott

Short inspection of Thomas Bewick School

Following my visit with Judith James, Ofsted Inspector, on 12 April 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, your school has become a foundation school within The Compass Trust. This trust comprises four special schools within Newcastle-upon-Tyne local authority, with the local authority being the fifth member of the trust. The school operates on two adjacent sites, one for primary and one for secondary and post-16 provision.

You and other senior leaders have successfully addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The development of middle leadership, one of the areas for improvement, has been very successful.

Your governors have developed their ability to hold you and other leaders in the school to account in a challenging and supportive way. Recent refinement of roles, to align more closely with the leadership responsibilities in school, have helped the governing body develop and implement its broader strategic responsibilities more effectively.

You and your governors have not ensured that the school's website includes all the required published information, that the school development plan includes more clearly defined milestones to aid ongoing assessment of school improvements, and that the varied approaches to pupil assessment are streamlined and consolidated.

The good rates of pupils' progress, observed during the previous inspection, continue. The early years provision continues to prepare the children well for the start of their statutory schooling. Pupils' progress remains good throughout key stages 1 and 2, especially in their acquisition of key literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, the pupils are well prepared for the secondary stage of their education. Although rates of progress are not quite as rapid for pupils in key stage 3, overall progress at secondary level is good.

When the pupils move into the 16 to 19 provision, they continue to develop a range of key skills, especially in communication, and, together with a balanced range of other learning experiences to compliment the formal taught curriculum, are well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have ensured that staff and pupils' awareness of the broader safety issues are good. Pupils feel safe and are aware of how to maintain their personal safety in school, which includes e-safety and any type of bullying. All log books relating to any aspect of safeguarding, including behaviour and bullying, are up to date with appropriate checks and follow-ups, as the need arises. The single central record, which confirms that all the required safeguarding checks on staff have been made, is fully compliant. Senior leaders have completed the necessary training relating to safer recruitment, and all staff have completed the required reading of the 'Keeping children safe in education' publication. Security procedures on both sites are good, with pupils and staff very aware of what their personal responsibilities are to maintain this high level of site security.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff are working well together to improve the provision for all pupils.
- Your school self-evaluation is generally accurate.
- You and other leaders continue to share common aspirations for further improvements throughout the school. Senior staff leaders, in particular, are working very positively with those appointed at middle leadership level. These middle leaders feel appreciated and valued, and report that their ideas for improvements in their areas of responsibility are readily welcomed and appropriately considered by senior leaders. As a result, suitable actions are being taken to improve the provision further.
- Your governing body has a good balance of experience and expertise, and is able to support and challenge you regarding all aspects of the school's provision. Governors are alert to changes within the school, and within the changing world of governance more generally. However, despite completing and publishing a detailed equality policy to reflect the school's ethos of equal access for all, which includes objectives to meet this laudable aim, the governing body has failed to

publish information annually to show how they are meeting the aims of the general public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010.

- The school development plan identifies a clear set of priorities and actions for further improvement. However, there is an absence of suitable milestones by which the rate of progress for each of these separate priorities and actions can be accurately assessed by you and other leaders, including governors, over the life of the plan. Separate middle leaders' actions plans, based accurately on different subject and key stages, feed effectively into the school development plan.
- The school does not meet all the requirements on the publication of information on its website about test and examination results, additional funding received for the physical education and sport premium for primary aged pupils, and the relevant information about special educational needs, particularly in relation to the broader requirement of the Equality Act 2010.
- The overall good quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. Your staff have developed their experience and expertise in teaching pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), making particularly good use of individualised approaches to pupils' learning.
- Your staff are also successfully continuing to develop a range of approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, with some particularly good examples of problem solving in practical mathematics.
- There are some good examples of ongoing and regular assessment of pupils' progress in their learning, particularly in key literacy and numeracy skills. Although your staff are using a variety of approaches to pupil assessment, which are well matched to particular skills or the developmental needs of the pupils, there are some inconsistencies across the school. Some teachers write more about what they have observed the pupil doing rather than what the pupil has learned. This limits the potential for regular and more accurate collection of ongoing pupil progress information in lessons.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is good. The school remains alert to issues of extended holiday leave for a small proportion of Bangladeshi children, ensuring that no pupils are lost to education.
- The school continues to give a high priority to pupils' personal development through the taught curriculum, and in out-of-school activities.
- Pupils are purposefully engaged in their learning, which contributes to their positive behaviour in school. You and your senior colleagues quickly recognised the need to support new staff who have limited experience of working with pupils with ASD. As a result, your senior leadership team has successfully introduced an induction programme to help these new staff develop their ability to work productively with all pupils, including those who may exhibit particularly challenging behaviour.
- Pupils' progress is good, with no significant differences for different groups of pupils. As a result, almost all your pupils achieve or exceed their identified targets each year.

- You and your staff have also successfully measured individual pupils' progress in communication and behaviour, which is contributing to a good level of knowledge about your pupils' personal achievements in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school's website is accurate, fully up to date and includes the required information relating to the publication of test and examination results, the impact of additional funding for physical education and sport, and relevant information about special educational needs, particularly in relation to the broader requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- they streamline and consolidate approaches to pupil assessment throughout the school
- there are clearer milestones in the school development plan, so that senior leaders and governors can more accurately measure the rate of progress in all priorities and actions over the life of the plan.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian G Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short, one-day inspection, the inspectors met with you, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with a small number of middle leaders and with one group of primary- and one group of secondary-aged pupils. The inspection began with an extended discussion with you to outline and agree some key areas to review during the day, and to agree a strategy for observing the work of the school. The morning was used to make joint lesson visits (senior leaders and inspectors) to almost all classes in the school to observe practice, and to talk with teachers and pupils. A sample of pupils' workbooks was examined in all classes to confirm that they are continuing to achieve at least a good rate of progress in the key subject areas of mathematics and English. Inspectors reviewed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, before and during the inspection, in addition to receiving and evidencing written comments from a small number of parents. Inspectors also reviewed the online questionnaire completed by 51 members of staff. Summary outcomes from both surveys were shared with the headteacher.