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Ms Julie Gordon
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Gordon

Short inspection of South Wellfield First School

Following my visit to the school on 7 June 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils with whom I spoke said they feel they receive a good education. They particularly enjoy their work, for example learning about rainforests or the Romans. They appreciate visits, such as to Roman remains, which enhance their knowledge and understanding of history. Pupils enjoy learning about local history, which helps them appreciate and understand the community in which they are growing up. Teaching captures pupils' imaginations, and visits to places of interest support pupils' personal development by raising their awareness of how to keep safe when visiting theatres or public events. This shows that teaching and learning are enhanced through the use of more imaginative approaches, an area identified for improvement at the last inspection.

Since the last inspection, you and your leadership team have worked hard to raise staff expectations of what pupils can achieve. You have revised the curriculum and ensured that activities build on prior learning so that pupils can make a smooth progression in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. The most able pupils now make more rapid progress as a result of these changes. There are now more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of backgrounds and beliefs different to their own. Pupils talked knowledgeably about their visits to a

Hindu Temple and a synagogue and of their studies of different countries, including Australia.

Governors are effective in holding you and your staff to account. They are knowledgeable about the work of the school and use their expertise well to challenge the school to improve. Governors understand the school performance information and come to see for themselves how well pupils are learning. Reports of these visits are shared with the whole governing body. Governors meet their statutory duties well and have a very detailed understanding of how school finances are managed. They are aware of the impact of funding on outcomes for pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils, and know how the primary sports funding is used to improve pupils' health and well-being.

You are aware that there remain some aspects of the school's work that could be even better. For example, questioning of pupils by teachers sometimes is not probing enough to make them think deeply. There is scope to improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling and handwriting in some classes. A small minority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire do not feel comfortable about contacting the school and think that the school's communication with them could improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and governors place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe, and have maintained the high standards of practice reported on in the last inspection. You have continued to ensure that procedures are rigorous and that records are comprehensive and detailed. Training for staff, including enhanced training for designated officers, is refreshed on a regular basis. Staff are vigilant in recording any concerns and these are followed up with appropriate agencies, when necessary, to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They have learned how to keep safe when using computers, crossing the road and riding their bicycles. You have worked closely with other agencies, such as building contractors, who have recently visited the school. They offered advice to pupils on how to keep safe and away from the building work which is taking place on the estate. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils confirm that staff deal quickly with any concerns they may have. Almost all parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, and the school's own questionnaire of parents' views, indicated that their children feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- You provide effective leadership and rigorously hold staff to account for the quality of their teaching and pupils' outcomes. You identify clearly where any pupils may be underachieving and take successful steps to ensure these are addressed. You have ensured that all staff receive the training required and, as a result, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve.

- Senior and other leaders with responsibilities are passionate about improving outcomes in the areas or subjects for which they are responsible. This was evident in the improvements in mathematics. It is clear from pupils' work that they are rapidly developing their calculation and arithmetic skills and are able to apply their knowledge and understanding to reason and solve problems. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015 and has a very clear understanding of how things can improve even further.
- The leadership of the early years is strong and this is leading to outcomes for children that are rapidly improving. Children settle quickly into Nursery and enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. They are developing their number skills well. For example, when building a tower of blocks, identifying 'one more', they reached 21 before the tower fell. Children in Reception fully engaged in an activity to locate 'treasure' using coordinates, showing their clear understanding of this concept. There are many opportunities for children to develop their physical skills outdoors and their fine motor skills. They are developing a good pencil grip, forming letters and numbers correctly and using their phonics skills well (letters and the sounds they represent) to help them with their reading and writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and often capture pupils' imagination with the tasks they provide. Pupils enjoy working in pairs and groups to discuss their learning and share ideas. Marking and feedback are effective in moving pupils on in their learning. However, while teachers ask appropriate questions, not all are sufficiently probing to help pupils think more deeply.
- A strong focus on improving writing across the school has improved the quality of pupils' writing. However, there remain some issues with spelling, handwriting and the presentation. While there are some examples of good-quality writing at length in other subjects and opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, this is not consistent across the school. In some cases, the expectations of the standards of writing are not as evident in other subjects as they are in the pupils' English books.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved and are courteous and polite to adults and to each other. They are proud of their school and of what they have achieved. They relish opportunities to take on responsibilities as 'buddies' and school councillors, and are caring and helpful to one another. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Any absences are rigorously followed up to ensure pupils are safe.
- Staff work hard to ensure that parents are involved in their children's learning and can celebrate their achievements. There are opportunities for parents to come into school and look at their children's work. Parents are also invited to class assemblies and accompany pupils on school visits. However, a small minority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, expressed concerns about communication with the school as they feel that information is not always forthcoming or timely. A very few feel uncomfortable in approaching leaders with their concerns.
- Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities which are broadly typical for children of their age. They make good progress across the school and by

the end of Year 4 attain above what is expected for their age. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar strong progress to their classmates. In 2013 and 2014, disadvantaged pupils attained slightly higher standards than their peers, but in 2015 they did comparatively less well. However, leaders have identified this and are taking successful steps to ensure these pupils achieve as well in future. Evidence can be seen in some pupils' work that the most able are challenged to achieve their best.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects in the curriculum and that the same high standards are expected
- the quality of pupils' handwriting, spelling and the presentation of their work is of a consistently high quality in all subjects and classes.
- adults ask more probing questions to enable pupils to think more deeply
- governors, leaders and staff ensure that parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with any concerns they may have and make sure that communication with parents keeps them informed about the work of the school and their child's progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short, one-day inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. You, and the deputy headteacher, conducted joint observations of teaching, learning and assessment with me. I evaluated information in relation to pupils' progress and looked at samples of pupils' work. I spoke to pupils informally in lessons and also met formally with a group of pupils. I scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement plans, the school's own self-evaluation and information on attendance and safeguarding. I considered the views expressed in the online questionnaire, Parent View, and also those in the school's own survey of parents' views. I also spoke to a number of parents before school started in the morning. I considered the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no pupil questionnaires completed as part of this inspection.