

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



8 February 2016

Mr Mike Poppitt
Headteacher
Whinstone Primary School
Lowfields Avenue
Ingleby Barwick
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 0RJ

Dear Mr Poppitt

Short inspection of Whinstone Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 January 2016 with Jo Sharpe HMI, 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 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 and your staff have created a secure atmosphere for learning in the school. Together you have built on positive relationships between teachers and pupils that are characterised by hard work and diligence. As a result, pupils are pleased with their school and are enthusiastic about their learning. You and your governors' ambition to provide the best provision is sometimes hindered by an over-optimistic view when balancing strengths and areas for development.

Pupils concentrate well in lessons and work well together on tasks. They move around school in an orderly fashion and show respect towards each other and teachers. As a result, they enter classrooms ready to work and settle to tasks quickly. This contributes to a calm and purposeful atmosphere in and around the school. Pupils say some lessons are occasionally interrupted by those that have lost interest but this is rare.

Parents have a high regard for the school. They generally feel well informed about the progress their children have made and that any issues they raise are dealt with effectively. They trust the school leaders. Parents find the school a safe and supportive place to send their children.

This effective leadership has also ensured that areas identified for improvement by inspectors, notably in the progress of pupils in mathematics and the teaching of linking sounds and letters (phonics), in Key Stage 1 have been successfully addressed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding practice is secure. There is a shared understanding that promoting the safety and well-being of the pupils is of paramount importance. Frequent training keeps staff well aware of different risks to pupils' safety and well-being. Senior leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The school has a calm working environment, and adults who work with the pupils fully understand the school's published Child Protection and Safeguarding policies. Adults apply these policies very effectively in their everyday practices. Pupils have a well-informed understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and how to deal with cyberbullying. They are aware of, but less confident about, other forms of bullying, such as homophobic bullying. Minor administrative errors in the management of record-keeping in relation to the central record were promptly rectified by the school.

Inspection findings

- Evidence seen during the inspection confirms the overall evaluation made by school leaders that this is a good school. Your focus on developing basic skills has seen a strong sustained performance by the school. Outcomes for pupils in phonics assessments, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been consistently strong over a number of years. Pupils make good progress from various starting points and those that need to catch up do so quickly. However, some of the significant strengths identified by you and your governors are not sufficiently balanced by the relative weaknesses for evaluations to be absolutely precise.
- In Key Stage 2, progress has been consistently strong over recent years with progress in writing being well above that seen nationally for the past three years. More pupils meet the required standards in reading, writing and mathematics than seen nationally by the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils gaining above-average standards is broadly in line with that seen nationally.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 is equally swift in reading and writing, with those pupils vulnerable to underachieving making rapid progress and catching up quickly. Outcomes in mathematics, while improving are not as strong as those seen in reading and writing. The linking of sounds and letters is a strength of the school with the vast majority of pupils meeting and many exceeding the expected standard over the last two years.
- The picture is less secure in early years. Leaders recognise that, despite recent improvements, outcomes at the end of early years are still not strong enough for some children. This rightly continues to be a focus for development and recent improvements have also secured greater equality for boys and those

disadvantaged children that need to catch up quickly.

- Pupils' learning is supported effectively through planned curriculum experiences that are closely matched to their differing needs. Pupils understand the next steps they need to take to improve their work. They value the guidance from teachers on how to improve their work, although some feedback does not always match the school policy. Evidence seen in lessons and books shows that in some instances the level of challenge provided is not always sufficient to push more pupils to achieve above age-related expectations.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and sometimes find it challenging. Teachers identify and promote a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write and to apply their mathematical skills in many different subjects and contexts. The improving standard of writing is evident in pupils' work. Pupils read regularly and have a good knowledge of books, genres and authors. They take pride in their work, especially their writing.
- School leaders are taking effective action to address issues of attendance at the school. Evidence seen during the inspection shows that rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those that need to attend more regularly have markedly improved.
- You have secure processes in place to monitor the quality of teaching, including checking the quality of the work that pupils are producing. This is effective in supporting and challenging staff with a clear reference to the progress pupils make. This information directly informs your evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and the performance management of teachers. As a result, you and your staff have maintained high standards in basic literacy and mathematics and improved outcomes in areas identified for action.
- Governors have a high level of commitment and passion for the school. The Chair of the Governing Body has refocused their work and sharpened their impact. Governors have audited their skills, identified strengths and weaknesses, built capacity and hold you more directly to account. Governors' regular presence in the school and systems for checking on the progress the school makes ensures they know the school well. They understand the current priorities and how they will be addressed. However, they are influenced by evaluations that are at times over-optimistic, which can lead to some priorities being missed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvement in the outcomes for early years is built on and accelerated
- self-evaluation accurately identifies the current position of the school so that plans for improvement are more precise and governors develop a sharper understanding of what is required to take the school to the next level
- the challenge for pupils seen in the best lessons is consistently applied across all classrooms and leads to more pupils achieving beyond age-related expectations
- recent improvements in attendance are maintained and built on, especially for vulnerable pupils and those that need to attend more often.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. We visited several classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. We spoke with some parents, pupils in lessons and a selected group of pupils about the school. We reviewed information from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We evaluated a range of documentation about the school, including recent information about the progress pupils make and how the accuracy of these assessments is secured.