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29 July 2016

Mrs Jini Sara
Gosforth Park First School
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Dear Mrs Sara

Short inspection of Gosforth Park First School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils, parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its leaders.

An ambitious but extremely harmonious and caring atmosphere pervades the school. The watchword of 'respect' shines through all that goes on in your school. You know each individual child well and work hard, with the staff, to ensure that their individual personalities are nurtured and developed.

The quality of teaching and learning has developed since the previous inspection. You have made some very shrewd appointments to increase the capacity of the teaching staff. Your commitment to the provision of an interesting and enticing curriculum ensures that pupils are very engaged with their learning. A parent reported that her child often returns from school 'buzzing' about something new that he has learned in class.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the effectiveness of the system to track pupils' attainment and progress. The school works well with the other eight first schools in the Gosforth Schools' Trust to confirm judgements made about pupils' work. Following the removal of assessment by levels, you have ensured that the school has played an integral part in

developing the authority-wide systems for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. Although not yet firmly embedded, great strides have been made in ensuring that assessment and tracking systems are both robust and reliable.

As recommended at the time of the previous inspection, you have delegated areas of responsibility to other senior leaders throughout the school. As a result, their leadership skills have developed and they can account for the impact of the actions they have taken. Work is continuing to develop subject leadership in a similar manner.

Staff are proud to work at Gosforth Park First School and are overwhelmingly supportive of your leadership. Almost all parents agree that the school is well led and managed although some say communication between school and home could be improved. This view was echoed by some of the pupils in the online questionnaire. Pupils wanted to know more about the timetable and when physical education is taught, why some pupils have to move into different classes for the beginning of the next academic year, what they are going to learn in the future (and especially when they will learn about Egypt) and what they are expected to do at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all staff have a deep understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm through attendance at high-quality continuing professional development. Levels of adult supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes are high. Pupils behave well. They understand what constitutes bullying and told me that it happens very rarely at Gosforth Park First School. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult to help if they have a problem. You and your dedicated staff 'go the extra mile' for pupils and their families during times of crisis, seeking out additional support and training when necessary.

Assertive actions undertaken by the deputy headteacher and the school's administrative team, in collaboration with a dedicated attendance officer, have led to a strong increase in pupils' attendance and a decrease in levels of persistent absence during the current academic year.

Inspection findings

- Children make good progress in the early years. The proportion who reach a good level of development has increased year on year over time and is well above average. The children are more than ready for the increased demands of the Year 1 curriculum when they leave the Reception classes. Staff ensure that each child's progress throughout the key stage is recorded in a learning journal. Parents, who are true partners in their children's education, are delighted to review the journals throughout the academic year and receive them at the end of the key stage. The early years leader understands both the strengths and areas for development of the provision well. The development of challenge in the outdoor learning environment is currently the prime focus of improvement activities.

- Leaders, following a dip in the proportion of pupils who achieved the standard in the 2015 Year 1 check of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), took assertive action to improve adults' subject knowledge. As a result, the proportion of pupils who achieved the check in 2016 increased by 20% to 89%.
- The school's published assessment information indicates that pupils reach significantly higher standards than average in reading, writing and mathematics over time at the end of key stage 1. Pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading and writing across key stage 1, and in Years 3 and 4, through a well-established emphasis on literature. The school is alive with examples of pupils' writing: it almost bounces off the walls.
- Pupils' achievements in mathematics are not celebrated in a similar fashion. Their progress in mathematics is not as good. In addition, the most able pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics. A check on pupils' mathematics workbooks showed that much of the work completed by pupils is correct. This suggests that there is insufficient challenge and not enough opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge and skills to solve problems and carry out mathematical investigations. Although most pupils who responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire thought that teachers set challenging work, a quarter stipulated that this happens only some of the time.
- The presentation of pupils' work in key stages 1 and 2 is not yet good enough. Although pupils are more than capable, very few write, as a matter of course, in a joined script. Many pupils do not use a ruler when necessary. Leaders, teachers and support staff do not have high enough expectations of pupils in this area.
- Leaders have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They had accurately evaluated the school's overall effectiveness as 'good' prior to the inspection. The subject leader for mathematics has monitored teaching and learning, understands what needs to be done and has drawn up a plan of actions to secure improved outcomes.
- Governance is effective. Governors possess a wide range of skills, in areas such as finance and education, which they use well to support and challenge the work of senior leaders. Some governors have developed links with subject and phase leaders to increase their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and the wider work of the school. This developmental work has not yet been undertaken by all governors.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are welcoming to visitors, and are happy to share their views about the school and their ideas for further improvements. Pupils have respect for one another and for the adults who work in school. They are very good at holding doors open for adults and giving a cheery 'hello'. Pupils enjoy attending the extra-curricular clubs at Gosforth Park First School and appreciate the opportunity to attend different activities that are provided at Broadway East First School, which is just next door.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- mathematics is given the same high priority as writing and reading, and that pupils are given plentiful opportunities to develop their confidence and skills through problem-solving activities and mathematical investigations
- all teachers and teaching assistants have the very highest expectations of pupils, set challenging work and insist on high-quality presentation.

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

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, the leader of the early years, the school's achievement partner and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I checked a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I examined information about pupils' achievement, attendance and behavioural incidents together with external evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 65 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I visited most classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment, alongside you. I checked the progress made by pupils in their workbooks, talked formally to a group of six pupils, and talked more informally to pupils in lessons and at breaktime about their learning.