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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Helen Malbon
Headteacher
Viewley Hill Academy
Andover Way
Hemlington
Middlesbrough
TS8 9HL

Dear Mrs Malbon

Short inspection of Viewley Hill Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment five years ago, you have worked tirelessly and successfully to bring about change. You know your school well. Your self-evaluation of the strengths and the areas in need of further development in school demonstrates this well. Your focus on improvement and moving the school forward in line with your very clear vision has ensured that the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils have remained good.

Your passion for doing the best possible for your pupils is shared by all staff. The exacting standards you apply to both yourself and your leadership team are clearly understood by staff, pupils and parents. The loyal and very enthusiastic staff in school back your leadership to the hilt. They hold both you and the deputy headteacher in high esteem. They feel that you are both not only strong leaders but also strong role models who lead by example.

Provision and outcomes in the early years are continuing to improve. Children often start school with lower levels of skills and knowledge than may be expected for their age. The fact that almost a third of children started Nursery not yet toilet-trained and with low levels of speech and language skills is clear evidence of their low starting points.

Staff are skilled at measuring children's starting points and do so quickly after they arrive. This fast start enables staff to plan learning that meets the pupils' individual needs; many make accelerated progress from the outset.

Your disappointment in last year's key stage 1 results in national tests is very clear. Your actions to ensure that current pupils are given the best opportunity possible to learn to a greater depth are sound. The latest school information and work in books demonstrate clearly the success of your actions. The demanding targets you have set for both staff and pupils are very clear. However, you are also aware that pupils' progress and the quality of teaching across the key stage need close monitoring by senior leaders. This will ensure that both are firmly and successfully on track.

You have quite rightly recognised that standards and pupils' progress in reading dipped slightly last year. You have put in place a raft of measures which are already indicating improvement in pupils' progress. Parents who spoke to me were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Those that completed the online questionnaire also gave very positive feedback. While the school has, in the past, offered support and training for parents in a variety of different areas, this has not recently included helping their children to read. While you are aware of this as a whole-school need, no timetable to address this has yet been put in place.

The high standards and ambition you have for pupils in key stage 2 are palpable. Older pupils who spoke to us about their work were clear about their future ambitions and focused on doing the very best they could. Their ability to critique their own work and to identify the very best and what needed further 'polish' was impressive. Pupils' enthusiasm for attending school was obvious and reflected in their good levels of attendance and punctuality.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all members of staff are very clear about the role they play in safeguarding all pupils in school. Staff understanding of recent government guidance is impressive. Their zealous focus on ensuring that all relevant pieces of information are recorded is excellent.

Governors are clear about their safeguarding duties. They have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that high-quality records are kept.

The work undertaken by the parent support adviser makes a very strong contribution to keeping children safe. Her very good levels of understanding of the needs of the community that the school serves, and her close and frequent working relationships with other professionals, enable her to offer support and guidance to parents.

The parent support adviser's tireless and tenacious approach to making sure that pupils attend school regularly is noteworthy and has contributed well to pupils' high levels of attendance overall.

Pupils I spoke to were very keen to tell me how safe they feel in school. They demonstrated good levels of understanding of how to stay safe, for example when on the internet. They clearly recognised the different forms that bullying can take. Pupils were also clear about what to do should this be a problem that they encountered.

Inspection findings

- Children make good progress in the early years, often from low starting points. Girls' progress is slightly better than that of boys overall. School leaders are aware of this and work hard and successfully to redress the balance. The number of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception is increasing year on year, but currently remains a little below that expected nationally.
- Staff are well trained and experienced at teaching pupils to match the sounds made by letters. This results in pupils making good and better progress in developing phonics skills. In 2016, Year 1 pupils exceeded national expectations overall.
- Key stage 1 pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics continues to improve. The direct support of senior leaders in Year 2 has accelerated progress, particularly in mathematics. A clear focus on developing pupils' skills in mastery is evident in their books. This has improved the tenacity and success with which they tackle mathematical problems and learn to a greater depth.
- Senior leaders are aware that this improvement needs to be monitored closely and have put in place a timetable for improvement.
- Reading skills are improving across the school, particularly in key stage 1. However, improvement is slower than it could be, because pupils are not always given sufficient time to practise reading, particularly at home.
- Pupils make good and better progress in key stage 2. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are exceptionally proud of the progress they have made in learning. They demonstrated very mature attitudes when discussing their work. They are discerning and knowledgeable about how they can improve.
- Most-able pupils continue to make strong progress overall, particularly in key stage 2. Their improved performance in key stage 1 is clearly evident in books.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is often faster than that made by other groups of pupils. This is because leaders and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is closely targeted to the needs of pupils. For example, the provision of a free breakfast club has improved both the attendance and punctuality of disadvantaged pupils.
- The small group of parents spoken to at the start of the school day were exceptionally pleased with the provision made for their children. They felt that

school supported them well and spoke very positively about the work of the parent support adviser. This was also reflected in the comments made on Ofsted's online text service.

- Governors are very clear about school strengths. Their good levels of knowledge and understanding of school data have enabled them to identify areas for improvement independently. These areas clearly match those in the school development plan. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors offer good levels of challenge to senior leaders and have made a valuable contribution to bringing about school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff work more closely with parents to increase the opportunities pupils have to be heard reading
- they continue to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress closely in key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and a group of parents. I also reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation and the data they collect for measuring pupils' progress. I also reviewed the work in pupils' books and observed learning in a range of different classrooms with senior leaders.

At the start of the inspection I identified five key lines of enquiry and used them as a focus for questions during the inspection. The areas included: progress in reading and writing in the early years; the progress of most-able pupils in key stage 1 in learning to a greater depth; how effectively leaders check the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1; how well they use pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils; and how effectively school safeguards and protects pupils.