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Mrs Paula Ayto
Principal
Reid Street Primary School
Reid Street
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County Durham
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Dear Mrs Ayto

Short inspection of Reid Street Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017, 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 May 2012.

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 just over a year ago, you have focused on improving the good foundations that you inherited within the school. Your passion, coupled with determination and a very good understanding of the school, has helped you to bring about further improvement at a fast pace. You have built a strong leadership team who share your vision for the future of the school. Staff also share your determination to make the school even better.

Pupils continue to make good progress across the school in both mathematics and English. Your forensic approach to analysing school data has enabled you to recognise the progress of individual pupils and different groups. You have recently carried out a detailed audit of how the school spends the funding it receives for disadvantaged pupils. This has enabled you to clearly identify the barriers these pupils face both inside and outside school and target support for them more accurately. Current data shows that differences between their progress and that of other pupils nationally are diminishing in most year groups across the school.

Since the previous inspection, you have worked hard and successfully to improve the quality of teaching of mathematics across the school. The results of pupils' attainment in the national tests last year clearly evidence the success of your strategies as results in mathematics rose across both key stages 1 and 2.

The creative curriculum in school gives pupils opportunities to learn in a variety of

different ways. For example, pupils in Year 4 recently re-enacted the battle of Bosworth in the school hall. This, coupled with visits to a wide variety of different locations, including the seaside and a local castle, has given pupils a range of new experiences which have in turn improved their writing skills. The curriculum is not only very well planned, but also it offers pupils a rich and wide selection of opportunities to participate in sport. The work of the physical education coordinator and the recently employed sports apprentice has led to an increase in the number of sports offered to pupils. These include dodge ball, football, boccia, basketball and swimming. The array of trophies on display in the school entrance is clear evidence of the strength of pupils' sporting prowess, despite the lack of facilities other than the hall and the school playground.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress to others. Your recognition that a significant number of pupils who attend school have speech and language problems has enabled you to develop effective bespoke support for these pupils. The teaching assistant who delivers this support has undertaken extra training, which has allowed her to make a difference to more than one hundred pupils within school. Her very close working partnership with the speech and language therapy team has further increased the effectiveness of this work, which benefits pupils across the school.

You are rightly proud of pupils' behaviour across the school. Despite the difficulties faced by many pupils, attitudes and behaviour in the classroom are very good. Only infrequently is learning disrupted by episodes of difficult behaviour. This is because staff have very high expectations and are consistent in their use of the school's behaviour management strategies.

Children who join the Reception class often come from a wide variety of pre-school provision. They arrive with a wide range of skills and knowledge, often below what is typical for their age. They soon settle into the routines of the Reception classes and start to learn and make progress. Activities offered to children encourage them to develop strong social skills and to learn how to play together. However, there are not always enough planned activities to enable them to make strong progress in early writing or in developing early number skills. This slower progress for some children was reflected in the dip in the number of children reaching the expected standard at the end of last year. Current data shows that children are on track to reverse this trend by the end of this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

The work of the highly effective deputy principal has ensured that safeguarding pupils is central to the school's work. Her meticulous and methodical approach to recording all incidents electronically enables her to monitor and respond effectively to safeguarding concerns. Her vigilant approach and close working partnership with other professionals enables her to support pupils and their families, often at times of crisis.

You take pride in the fact that whole-school attendance is above that of other

similar schools. However, the attendance of some pupils is not as good as it could be. The deputy principal rightly regards this as a potential safeguarding issue. With the help of the parent support adviser, the deputy principal identifies the key concerns for each family. Support offered takes a variety of forms, from purchasing alarm clocks, to offering to help launder pupils' clothes, to bringing pupils to school in the morning until parents are able to take over the role themselves. This often very practical support increases pupils' attendance and supports the well-being of families.

Governors and staff at all levels undertake regular safeguarding training. As a result, procedures in school to keep pupils safe and secure are strong. This is appreciated by parents who feel that school not only keeps their children safe in school, but also teaches them how to keep themselves safe crossing the road, riding a bike and when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- Children who join the school's Reception class come from a large number of pre-school settings. While staff visit a number of different settings, they do not always manage to develop effective links with all of them. Sometimes this affects the quality of data collected by school and slows the assessment of children's abilities when entering school.
- Children settle well into the early years. They quickly develop a range of skills such as how to take turns when playing together. Their development of more academic skills, such as writing and mathematics, sometimes takes longer because opportunities to practise these skills are not always planned as frequently as they should be. This slows the progress for some children.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make good and often better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in last years' national phonics check for pupils in Year 1 were above those nationally. Current data shows that your Year 1 pupils are on course for similarly pleasing results this year.
- Key stage 2 pupils also make good and better progress over time across the curriculum. Leaders and governors have ensured that recommendations to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics have been fulfilled, and this improvement is evidenced in the improved attainment of Year 6 pupils in mathematics last year.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils last year dipped. However, school data shows most are now on course to make good and better progress in both English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- close monitoring is carried out on the provision and outcomes in the early years foundation stage in order to ensure that as many children as are able reach the early learning goals.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Darlington. 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 examined a range of documents. These included safeguarding documents and the school's data on measuring pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. I also took into account the 17 responses from parents who completed the online Parent View questionnaire and the responses of 19 members of staff who also completed the Ofsted online survey. I held meetings with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, members of staff and senior leaders. I held informal meetings with parents and pupils at the start of the school day and at break- and lunchtime. Accompanied by senior leaders, I observed learning in classes across the school and looked at work in pupils' books.