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13 February 2017

Mrs Sarah Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Netherton Northside First School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Since the last inspection, you have provided dedicated and insightful leadership. This has ensured that pupils receive good teaching in a nurturing learning environment, which enables them to flourish personally and academically. Along with your school improvement partner and governors, you have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The school's self-evaluation and development plan clearly identifies the priorities for improving the school further. The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your staff have created an inclusive, caring and friendly school. Pupils feel safe, grow in confidence, and develop good learning behaviours. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was exemplary. Equally, you, your staff and governors aspire to help all pupils achieve the very best outcomes. For example, you have taken steps to improve provision in the early years as you identified the need to improve children's outcomes further. You have also put in place arrangements to provide some teaching at Harbottle First School to widen the opportunities for pupils to work alongside an increased number of pupils. This provides them with more opportunities to learn and socialise with others and to better prepare older pupils for the transition to middle school. The small group of parents that I met, who were representative of your current and past pupils, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school.

The school has successfully tackled the area identified for improvement at the previous inspection. You and your staff work hard to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress. Regular assessments help you to identify pupils' learning and to plan learning that matches pupils' needs. You have revised your pupil progress tracking systems to match the national curriculum. You and your staff use these to good effect to check each pupil's progress towards their targets. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. You have developed opportunities for independent learning and pupils' reflection on their own learning. For example, in science topics pupils review their knowledge at the start and end of a topic to establish how much they have learned. The leader for computing has comprehensively reviewed the teaching of computing and the use of computer programmes to support learning across the curriculum. She checks both coverage of the computing curriculum and pupils' progress carefully. During the inspection, older pupils were able to describe some of their programming skills with insight. While there are opportunities to use problem-solving in mathematics, the reasoning element of the mathematics curriculum is not as well developed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe. Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. Leaders complete safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including recent training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. The safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to audit the safeguarding arrangements. Governors are reviewing the safeguarding policy in March 2017 and recognise the need to complete this within an annual cycle.

Pupils are well taught about how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and what to do should it occur. Pupils say incidents of bullying do not happen in their school. The school's records show that incidents of misbehaviour and bullying are rare and dealt with appropriately by staff.

Inspection findings

- You have a good understanding of the learning and personal development needs of pupils in your school. You use your detailed assessment system well to keep a careful check on pupils' progress. Staff use this information to plan teaching, which is well matched to pupils' needs. Along with your staff, you take prompt action to provide support for any pupils where you identify gaps in their learning or if their progress dips. As a result, pupils' progress from their starting points is good across the school.
- You have a very inclusive approach. While there are no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently in school, you and your staff work hard to ensure that you provide for these pupils' needs effectively when they are

in your school.

- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and priorities for the school. They have received useful training from the local authority, including that provided by the school improvement partner. This has improved their skills to challenge leaders effectively. Governing body minutes and governors' visit reports demonstrate the improved level of challenge provided by governors to leaders.
- You have made effective use of your partnerships with other local schools. Following a fall in the number of pupils on roll, you have recently put in place twice-weekly visits for your staff and pupils to Harbottle First School for shared teaching sessions. This provides increased opportunities for pupils to socialise and develop their learning with a wider range of pupils and teachers.
- Children in early years benefit from good adult-led teaching. The classroom is well organised and resourced to enable children to select activities, which enhance their learning. Staff make effective use of both fiction and non-fiction books to engage children in their learning. For example, 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' had inspired children to write their own stories. During the inspection, the teaching assistant's careful questioning, while sharing a non-fiction book about Chinese New Year, helped children improve their cultural understanding. Children demonstrated a good knowledge of the facts about this celebration in their discussions.
- High expectations of staff and a caring atmosphere effectively develop pupils' personal and social skills. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is exemplary. Pupils are kind and supportive to one another and pupils from different age groups play, learn and socialise well together.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently introduced work with Harbottle First School is sustained to further widen pupils' learning and personal development and to continue to provide them with opportunities to work with a wider group of pupils
- the developments in early years provision ensure that children continue to make at least good progress and that the number of children achieving a good level of development increases.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools' commissioner and the executive director of wellbeing and community health services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and the subject leader for science and computing. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime, lunchtime and at other times during the day. I held discussions with a representative from the local authority and with two governors who were able to provide me with additional information. I also took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I talked with a group of three parents about their views of the school and considered the two written responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. I also reviewed the three responses to the staff questionnaire and the four responses to the pupil questionnaire. I visited both classes to observe teaching and learning, during which time I listened to pupils from a range of abilities read. I looked at pupils' mathematics and English work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.

This inspection particularly focused upon the following aspects of the school's work:

- leaders' impact on addressing areas for improvement in the previous inspection report
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and quality of the school improvement plan
- leaders' actions to make the most of partnership opportunities with other local schools
- pupils' progress in key stage 1 and key stage 2
- children's progress in early years and effectiveness of the classroom organisation to promote learning.