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Mrs Julie Cort
Headteacher
South Hylton Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cort

Short inspection of South Hylton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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.

Since the last inspection, you have provided dedicated and insightful leadership. This has ensured that pupils receive good teaching in a calm and purposeful learning environment, which enables them to grow personally and improve academically. Along with your deputy headteacher and governors, you have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The school's detailed self-evaluation and improvement plan clearly identify 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 a nurturing, friendly and harmonious school where pupils develop good learning behaviours and their confidence flourishes. Pupils work hard in lessons and teachers provide them with praise and feedback, which encourage pupils to improve and develop their work. The ethos of your school truly reflects your mission statement of 'Respect, Support, Enjoy, Achieve'. The overwhelmingly positive comments and responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, demonstrate that parents highly value the work of everyone in your school.

Leaders and staff have successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. The actions taken to ensure that all teaching matches the best in order to further boost achievement and raise pupils' attainment in English, especially for boys, have had a positive impact. You and your staff have introduced

a range of appropriate strategies to improve pupils' attainment, including boys' attainment in English. This has included identifying topics which link well to pupils' interests and providing opportunities which broaden pupils' experience and their motivation to read and write with greater depth. At the same time, you have adapted your teaching to have a greater focus on getting the basic skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling and phonics work well established.

The focused efforts by you and your staff have had a positive impact upon pupils' attainment in English. By the end of Year 6, overall pupils' attainment in reading, including boys' attainment, at least matches the national average and pupils' attainment in writing is above the national average. However, you recognise that while the progress of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with others nationally, these pupils need to improve their progress and increase their attainment, particularly in reading. Leaders have clear plans to accelerate disadvantaged pupils' progress further.

When we visited phonics lessons together, pupils were highly engaged with the activities, which staff had carefully matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' books demonstrated that, over time, they had made at least good progress in developing their phonics skills. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been above that found nationally. In 2016, all pupils had successfully achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. Leaders complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. The safeguarding policy meets the current national requirements and staff understand the procedures and their own responsibilities. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so that they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Safeguarding leaders manage referrals to other agencies effectively and leaders have a determined approach to following up any safeguarding cases. Leaders promptly respond to any required improvements to safeguarding guidance and practice, and seek appropriate advice from the local authority where required. This ensures that leaders maintain safeguarding procedures to a high standard.

Your curriculum helps pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They know the different forms that bullying can take and know that staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils value the work of peer mediators who they recognise will help them to resolve any 'falling out' with other pupils. The school's records show that staff quickly address the limited incidents of bullying. Parents agree that their children feel safe in your school and that staff ensure that children are well behaved.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors have managed changes to leadership and staffing since the last inspection effectively. As a result, you have maintained the good quality of teaching and leadership. Strong support ensures that staff who are new to the school develop important teaching and leadership skills to fulfil their roles successfully.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities and the community the school serves. They provide an effective balance of support and challenge. Their regular meetings with leaders, including subject leaders, keep them well informed about school improvements. As a result, they can strategically check that leaders' actions are improving outcomes for pupils.
- The subject leader for English has a good understanding of the priorities to improve pupils' outcomes. She has rightly focused upon improving pupils' reading outcomes, while at the same time making effective links between this work and developing pupils' writing skills. Your own evaluations show that some pupils need to improve their skills to understand the meaning of texts and be more motivated to read a range of quality texts. Teachers are making efforts to teach these skills explicitly and there is emerging evidence that older pupils are reading with increased understanding of texts and are becoming more skilled at using more advanced comprehension skills. While pupils' progress in reading is improving, there is more work to do to improve further the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in reading.
- The recently appointed subject leader for mathematics has begun to take action to improve further the quality of mathematics teaching. For example, she has provided guidance and resources to help teachers to develop their teaching of reasoning and problem-solving. Teachers are working hard to respond to these aspects of the new mathematics national curriculum and there is growing evidence that pupils are improving their understanding in these areas. Teachers set clear expectations for presentation and this reflects well in the quality of pupils' work in books. However, from our visits to classrooms, sampling of pupils' books and review of your pupils' progress information, you agreed that there is still further work needed to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, the school has introduced provision for two-year-olds. This provision is well organised to meet the learning, safety and welfare needs of these children. As a result, they respond well to the routines and sensitive guidance provided by staff and settle quickly into this provision. Good modelling of language and careful questioning encourage these young children to develop language skills and sustain their concentration on activities.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are generally below those typical for their age, sometimes well below. Most children make good progress, and the proportion achieving a good level of development has improved over the last three years, which means that an increasing number of children are well prepared to start Year 1. However, the proportion of children

achieving a good level of development remains below the national average. Leaders recognise the need to improve further children's attainment, particularly in reading and writing. During our visit to the early years classrooms, we noticed that adult-led teaching and opportunities where children chose activities to support their learning did not maximise children's learning in these areas.

- The leader for early years has a good understanding of the priorities for improvement. She has a detailed analysis of all children's progress, which takes into consideration a wide range of potential barriers to children's learning. Staff make effective use of this information to check children's progress. Parental engagement is strong. The early years leader organises helpful workshops for parents, which assist them to understand how they can support their child's learning. Homework activities, such as the 'Dark and Light' project, make good links between the learning in school and home. Parents value the support, guidance and communication that the school provides.
- You and your staff check the attendance of pupils carefully, and the school's overall level of attendance is close to the national average. Along with your governors, you have rightly identified the need to improve the attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have taken decisive action, including meeting with parents, to identify solutions for reducing pupils' absence levels where they are too high. As a result, there have been improvements in the attendance levels of the vast majority of these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities to improve children's progress in reading, and particularly writing in early years, are developed further, in order to improve the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerated further, particularly in reading and mathematics, so that the numbers of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards at least match the national averages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sunderland. 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 leaders for English, mathematics and early years. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held discussions with a representative from the local authority and with three governors who were able to provide me with additional information. I took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 23 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Along with you, I visited eight classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' English, mathematics and phonics work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.