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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Lee Walker
Headteacher
Barnard Grove Primary School
Barnard Grove
Hartlepool
TS24 9SD

Dear Mr Walker

Short inspection of Barnard Grove 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established an ethos of high expectation where staff have a concerted focus on the academic progress and wider personal development of pupils. You have strengthened senior leadership by building a strong team of leaders across different phases. These leaders regularly monitor pupils' progress and teacher performance to drive continual improvement. You have also managed the move to a new building, with the spatial and budgetary pressures this has brought, in an efficient manner that has not hindered ongoing development. Through effective teaching and close tracking, pupils make good and improving rates of progress.

You and your teachers have responded positively to the increased demands of the new national curriculum and associated assessment tasks. You have introduced regular assessment opportunities to support staff and pupils in the transition to more challenging assessment tasks. As a result, in 2016 pupils made good progress in key stage 2 while at key stage 1 the majority of pupils also made good progress from their starting points. Overall standards of attainment were in line with those achieved nationally, although a smaller proportion of pupils achieved success at greater depth. Leaders are aware of this and are currently strengthening the curriculum to accelerate pupils' progress at key stage 1 and create further opportunities for learning in greater depth at key stage 2.

You and your team are committed to providing a breadth of experiences that enhance pupils' wider development. Teachers balance a focus upon key skills of

literacy and numeracy with access to the wider curriculum. A new topic-based curriculum enables pupils to explore aspects of science, history and geography through shared contexts. Your appointment of a specialist physical education teacher gives pupils regular access to a range of sports and more specialist coaching that promotes the development of key skills. Pupils talked enthusiastically about their participation in football, netball, basketball, and cross-country running but also about less conventional activities such as skipping and dodge ball. One pupil described how sporting interests initiated at school had a significant impact upon his heightened involvement in similar activities outside of school. Significant proportions of pupils take part in a diverse range of extra-curricular clubs, including singing, drama and dance. Additional study support also takes place after school. These diverse experiences enhance pupils' social and cultural development and develop their self-confidence.

You have given your expanded leadership team increasing responsibilities for curriculum development and spreading good practice. They are also closely involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and standards of work over time in books. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and individual teachers have termly meetings with the full leadership team to review the progress of pupils in their class. These reviews inform future improvement activities and interventions to support underachieving pupils. Staff morale is high and teachers value their professional development. They are developing increasing accuracy in their assessment practices as a result of regular moderation with the local authority and partner schools. Three colleagues have particular expertise as moderators for the local authority to check standards at all phases across a range of schools. Tracking systems in school give an effective picture of pupils' progress, although the timing of subsequent review meetings does not always support early intervention and support.

Your team are committed to the personal and social development of pupils. Your social inclusion manager maintains close links with families and works with them to overcome barriers to learning. Links with parents are extremely strong and parents greatly value the quality of support provided for their children. Parents value this 'inclusive' and 'forward thinking' school where staff go 'above and beyond to create a fantastic learning environment'. Parents are welcomed to the school through a range of open mornings and family learning opportunities. One parent summed this up by writing: 'the school makes parents and pupils feel like we are one big family working together to achieve good outcomes.'

Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and clear processes are in place to identify their needs and provide them with support. Links with external partners to provide support for pupils with specific learning needs and medical needs are effective. You and your governors are rightly proud of the central place the school holds in the community. However, more needs to be done to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils by building ever stronger links with their families.

Governors are committed to the success of the school. They track progress regularly and carefully question performance management processes and their links to pupil

outcomes. Governors are increasing their expertise in their roles and embrace training opportunities, such as recent updates on safeguarding. They review the use of additional funding closely. Governors are developing more focused monitoring responsibilities to check leaders' views of standards. However, some of these processes do not enable them to hold leaders to account for pupils' current progress quickly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team maintain a constant focus on pupils' welfare and take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of adults working at the school. Staff receive up-to-date training on a range of key safeguarding issues. The school has a dedicated social inclusion manager with specific responsibilities for pupil welfare and attendance who works with senior leaders to regularly monitor pupils' well-being. Close links are maintained with external agencies and half-termly meetings take place with the local authority attendance officer. Any concerns over pupil welfare are followed up and records are assiduously kept. Pupils feel safe and well supported in school, and the vast majority of their parents and carers agree. Pupils spoken with were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- You and your team have raised aspirations and expectations and built increasing rigour into teaching, learning and assessment. You have strengthened leadership at senior level and also developed subject leadership and expertise across the school. This has contributed to good and improving rates of progress for the vast majority of pupils across key stages. While overall attainment is in line with national standards, the proportions of pupils working at greater depth remains below that seen nationally.
- Teaching is typically good across the curriculum. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge which they are using to bring increasing depth to the curriculum. In Year 1, pupils showed confidence in discussing complex grammatical terms and in Year 6 pupils thoughtfully explained their mathematical reasoning. However, more still needs to be done to enable increasing proportions of pupils to work at greater depth. Strong relationships and clear classroom routines underpin positive learning behaviours and pupils switch effectively from group activities and discussion to quiet working conditions.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan and work effectively together to support pupils. Their work to develop pupils' phonics skills has successfully contributed to pupils achieving levels in the phonics screening checks consistently above those seen nationally over a three-year period.
- Pupils are making particularly good progress in writing at key stage 2 as a result of good teaching and effective assessment. They have numerous opportunities to write at length and develop an understanding of grammar that they use to enhance their own writing and understand other texts. While their progress in

reading is also good, their vocabulary and inference and deductions skills require further development to enable them to work at greater depth. There is increasing evidence of stronger subject expertise supporting good progress in mathematics at key stage 2, although progress at key stage 1 is weaker. Although the majority of pupils make good progress at key stage 1 from their early years starting points, those rates of progress are slower than at key stage 2 and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work at greater depth.

- Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of science, history and geography through a series of integrated themes. This approach is stimulating interest and deepening pupils' understanding of these subjects at key stage 2. Even so, work in books shows that this is less assured at key stage 1.
- As a result of effective planning, purposeful activities and the judicious use of indoor spaces, children make good progress in the early years. Children are enthusiastic learners, keen to independently develop their word recognition skills and their understanding of time and number. Pupils interact closely with their learning environment and were seen enthusiastically researching the behaviour of their resident guinea pigs. In 2016, children made good progress from starting points and achieved levels of development in line with those seen nationally.
- Teachers review the progress of their pupils in individual termly progress meetings with the senior leadership team. Additional checks take place at regular staff and phase meetings. On occasions, tracking systems do not show the progress of groups of pupils timely enough to inform interventions. The majority of teachers provide written and verbal feedback in line with the school's policy that supports pupils in making good progress.
- Pupils show considerable pride in their work and in their appearance. They conduct themselves in a safe and orderly manner around the site. Pupils are active members of the school community and the vast majority participate in extra-curricular activities. This has contributed to the school's receipt of the sportsmark gold award. In addition to sport, pupils participate in dance, drama and singing clubs and competitions. Pupils develop responsibility in their roles as house captains and sports ambassadors and in their charity work, such as the money and books provided for the Footprints school and orphanage in Kenya.
- Leaders have instigated a number of strategies to improve attendance. The school's social inclusion manager regularly tracks attendance and works closely with families and external partners to overcome barriers to attendance. Direct meetings with families and family learning events are developing constructive relationships between home and school. In addition, incentives and rewards are motivating pupils to attend more regularly and an increasing number have achieved full attendance this year. As a result, current rates of attendance are improving for all pupils and for all key groups of pupils. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent or persistently absent than their peers. Actions to improve their attendance require continued intensity.
- Leaders' actions to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enable these pupils to make good progress. Provision is supported by regular review meetings with families and partnerships with external agencies to provide additional support for specific needs, such as speech

and language and social and emotional development. The overall progress of disadvantaged pupils is good, despite some variance. While their progress at key stage 2 and in the early years is good, they make slower progress at key stage 1. Current progress and a review of pupils' work shows that differences are continuing to diminish, although more needs to be done to increase the proportions of disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth. The smaller cohort of most-able pupils made mixed progress, achieving outcomes above those seen nationally in reading but below in mathematics at key stage 2 and writing at key stage 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- accelerate pupils' progress at key stage 1 and strengthen the curriculum to give pupils more opportunities to work at greater depth at key stage 1 and key stage 2
- further diminish differences between the progress, attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers nationally
- ensure that the timing of reviews of pupils' progress support prompt intervention and enable governors to effectively hold leaders to account for pupils' current progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I also met the special educational needs coordinator and the school social inclusion manager. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I met five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair. I also talked to the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I undertook a learning walk with your deputy headteacher. I also looked at pupils' work in books and folders. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record of security and suitability checks on staff. I took into account 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 19 freetext responses from parents. I also took into account 23 responses to Ofsted's

staff questionnaire.