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Mrs Lynne Pawley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pawley

Short Inspection of Rossmere Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your colleagues have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. It is to your credit that you have achieved this despite the changes in staffing that have happened, and the growing numbers of pupils joining the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who come from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.

The previous inspection highlighted strengths in teaching, leadership, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. These aspects remain strong. Parents, pupils and staff are unequivocally positive about all aspects of the school's work. Staff are proud to be part of the school and enjoy working here. The culture of the school is one of care and calmness, underpinned by strong and shared values.

Pupils say they feel secure and happy. Consequently, they are eager to attend and apply themselves well to their learning. Rates of attendance are consistently around national averages, and the proportions of pupils who are persistently missing from school have fallen since the last inspection. A strong work ethic is tangible in all classes.

At the previous inspection, leaders were challenged to ensure that all teaching is at least good; to improve achievement in mathematics in key stage 1; and to simplify the annual school improvement plan. Since then, you have taken advantage of the good practice in local schools and in the local teaching school alliance to ensure effective professional development opportunities for all staff. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Year 2 outcomes in mathematics have risen to the national average in recent years. In 2016, they were

overall above average, representing at least good progress, given pupils' prior attainment.

You and other leaders know your school extremely well. You have an accurate understanding of what is working well and why. However, you and other leaders are not complacent and recognise that the school can be even better. You have sensibly selected the main priorities aimed at improving the school further, and the school improvement plan is now a focused document that is understood by all. Leaders are meticulous in checking the quality of teaching. Consequently, you have a really detailed understanding of each teacher's strengths and areas for improvement. You have been successful in emphasising to all staff their responsibilities in ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress.

School information shows that children's outcomes at the end of the early years continue to rise, and were in line with national averages in 2016. Staff meet individual children's varied needs well. As a result, children in the early years get off to a good start. The vast majority of children achieve a good level of development and are ready for Year 1. Across key stage 1, many pupils achieve increasingly well. They make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes in phonics have particularly improved since the last inspection, and are now average by the end of Year 1. Many pupils also make good progress in writing in key stage 2, reaching above average standards by the end of Year 6. Although reading and mathematics outcomes were not as strong as those for writing in 2016, they are improving strongly in school due to the good and better teaching.

Senior and middle leaders regularly review how well the pupils are doing. The most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities largely achieve well. This is because of the rigorous checks that leaders make on how well pupils are progressing. You rightly identify that a small proportion of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, could be making more progress across key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books indicate that you and your staff are succeeding in making these necessary improvements.

Governors are aspirational and determined to see the school do even better. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas to improve. The governors provide a good blend of challenge and support and are not afraid to ask difficult questions of leaders. Governors are regular visitors to school. They are confident in providing reports for the full governing body, and its committees, about key aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and continue to be fit for purpose. You have successfully created a culture of vigilance when it comes to keeping children safe. Parents are very positive about the caring and considerate climate that you have developed within school. Staff have taken on board the key messages from the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education'.

They are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding practice, including neglect and other kinds of abuse, domestic violence and radicalisation. Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have about pupils, no matter what the issue and are confident that these will be acted upon by key leaders. Any concerns are carefully recorded and analysed in detail. Designated professionals take timely and decisive actions. Staff have formed strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and a range of external agencies and services. There are secure systems for checking and recording the suitability of adults to work in the school.

Staff know families and individual pupils very well indeed. Pupils say that they have every confidence that any worries they have will be listened to and dealt with. Detailed and thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to any trips and visits. Pupils' attendance levels are average, and the rates of persistent absence are falling. Assemblies are used well to teach pupils about keeping safe when online, and being tolerant and respectful of others.

Inspection findings

- The strong leadership you provide is much appreciated by all members of staff. Everyone is proud of the progress the school has made since the previous inspection. Staff appreciate the feedback they receive about their performance and the training and development opportunities you provide. Staff benefit from working in partnership with colleagues in local schools, and through the wider links within the local teaching alliance.
- The governing body is very active and involved in the life of the school. Governors are very supportive, but balance this well by regularly holding you to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in each class. They make focused visits to see for themselves whether the objectives set in the school improvement plan are being achieved. Governors have supported fully the recent external review, which you commissioned to confirm whether pupil-premium-funded activities are having the maximum impact on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.
- Children in the early years get off to a flying start. They enjoy the many stimulating activities and experiences, indoors and outdoors, that encourage them to share, learn and play together. As a result of the excellent relationships they enjoy with all of the adults, children make at least good progress from starting points that are typically below the expected level of development. Children learn well because teaching explicitly focuses on developing their language and communication skills, and lays solid foundations to support their reading, writing and number skills. Teachers use good questioning to continually probe and extend children's understanding. By the end of the Reception Year, most children attain a good level of development, and a growing number go beyond.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Years 1 and 2. Effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters make. An average proportion of children reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. The vast majority achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the

end of Year 2. Both the least able and the most able readers make strong progress because they regularly receive the specific help they need and are provided with books that are appropriate for their level of development.

- Writing outcomes for pupils in key stage 2 go from strength to strength. They were above the national average overall in 2016. Teachers are skilled in modelling effective writing skills. They support pupils particularly well to organise their ideas and views in complex sentences and bespoke paragraphs, use a wide range of punctuation and vocabulary for effect, and maintain accuracy in spelling.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers. The pupils I listened to read demonstrated good levels of fluency and understanding. They said how much they enjoyed the regular opportunities to read, both in school and at home. Pupils' reading records show that they are honing their skills, across all years, to retrieve, more efficiently, precise information from texts and to make assumptions about character and story developments. This indicates that teachers have responded successfully to the disappointing 2016 key stage 2 reading outcomes, and built on the meticulous analysis carried out by staff on the shortfalls in individual pupils' performances.
- Inspection evidence shows that daily arithmetic practice is enhancing pupils' confidence and agility in using the basic skills to calculate orally and accurately. Many pupils can confidently explain key mathematical concepts and the methods they are taking to solve problems. Nonetheless, you and your staff are not complacent. You rightly recognise the need to accelerate the progress of a small number of pupils in reading, as well as in mathematics, in key stage 2.
- You and your deputy headteacher have a meticulous and detailed grasp of how well different groups of pupils are achieving. As a result of this, you have rightly identified that more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds could be making even better progress in all subjects across key stage 2. Subject leaders are increasingly successful in spotting quickly which pupils may be falling behind, and in putting in place beneficial strategies to tackle this concern.
- The well-designed curriculum helps pupils to understand and respect one another's rights. Regular opportunities for all pupils, in all years, to work outdoors, helps to foster a strong appreciation of the natural world and local environment. It also enhances positively the spiritual and moral dimensions of pupils' personal development. This is evidenced in the high-quality displays of pupils' writing and artwork in a range of subjects across the school.
- The school's work to promote an awareness of diversity has been effective. Visits to different places of worship and projects on different religions have helped to broaden pupils' understanding and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct, both in lessons and at social times, is of a high order. They are very respectful of their teachers and of one another. Older pupils act as good role models through their various leadership activities and the care that they show towards younger pupils. Most pupils are keen to come to school and attend well. You have taken steps to remind parents of the importance of good attendance and the impact that this has on pupils' achievements.
- Parents are highly positive in their praise for you, other school leaders and staff.

They believe that their children are well looked after in school and are safe. Parents acknowledge the good teaching, and are particularly pleased about the many opportunities for their children to become involved in sport, music, art, science and technology activities. All parents who responded to the online Ofsted questionnaire would recommend the school to other parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the small number of identified pupils make even faster progress across key stage 2 in reading and mathematics
- more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make good progress in all subjects in key stage 2.

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

Andrew Swallow
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, and other key leaders and managers. I also met with six governors. I held telephone conversations with a local authority school improvement adviser and your school improvement partner. Together with you, I visited most classrooms to observe learning and to look at pupils' work. I also listened to some Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read. Consideration was given to the 11 free-text responses from parents and to the 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. I also took account of outcomes of your own parent questionnaires, completed during the autumn term of 2016. I evaluated the 38 staff responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire. Although no pupil completed the Ofsted questionnaire, I did gain views from pupils about the school, both formally and informally, during the inspection. In addition, I considered recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled some vulnerable children's case files.