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19 October 2017

Mrs Suzanne Binks
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Binks

Short inspection of Sunnybrow Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite managing significant staffing turbulence and some difficult personnel issues, you have kept your focus to ensure that pupils at Sunnybrow get a good deal. The staff team is now stable. The significant training and development opportunities you provide to them, as a result of the regular monitoring of learning, have ensured that more teaching is strong consistently. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Standards have risen year-on-year across school. The proportion of pupils achieving in line with age-related expectations is above that found nationally in reading and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. This is also the case in writing at the end of key stage 2. In summer 2017, the progress that Year 6 pupils made from their entry into key stage 2 was stunning and much greater than that found nationally.

Your calm and insightful leadership and passion to improve the life chances of the pupils in Sunnybrow shine through the school's work. Staff and governors embrace your vision. You have developed your small team of leaders successfully. They support you and governors well in your actions to continue to move the school forward. Pupils rate you highly and think you are 'the best'. Parents who spoke to me were highly positive about their children's education, safety and care.

You have worked determinedly and successfully with other leaders and governors to address the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and to continue to improve the school. For example, your focus on improving early years provision has ensured that higher than average proportions of children now reach a good

level of development. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of the thorough and regular reviews of the school's work that you all undertake. Your written self-evaluation is accurate and honest. Areas for improvement are identified precisely and inform the priorities in the school improvement plan.

You know that while pupils' achievement is improving, there is still more to be done to increase the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth or at a higher level. This was one of my areas of investigation when I came to the school. Also, while pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well in key stage 2, their achievements are not as strong in key stage 1. You have already implemented action plans to rectify these areas of relative weakness.

Systems to check pupils' progress have improved. On the whole, regular assessment information is used effectively by teachers to inform the activities they plan in order to meet the different skills and abilities of pupils. However, observation of learning and reviews of pupils' books show that occasionally teachers do not use this information consistently, particularly in writing activities. This means that occasionally activities planned for the least able pupils are too hard and sometimes they do not stretch the most able sufficiently.

The actions you are taking to improve attendance are robust. However, despite your best efforts, while improving, rates are still not where you would wish. The school is small, so attendance rates of groups of pupils are difficult to compare against national averages over time. A small proportion of pupils who are absent or one or two unauthorised holidays make a significant difference to attendance rates.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured a strong culture of safeguarding across all of the school's work. As designated safeguarding lead, you have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met. All staff and governors are trained formally in their statutory responsibilities regarding child protection and safeguarding. Regular training keeps them abreast of local or national concerns that impact on practice, for example learning through incidents in school or outcomes of local authority serious case reviews. You are persistent in referring to statutory services when you have concerns and ensure appropriate responses. Record-keeping is meticulous and of good quality. Case files show the strong actions you take and your work with other agencies such as social care, school nurses and early help teams to support pupils at risk. You work closely with your parent support adviser to ensure that families are supported in times of crisis.

Inspection findings

- As a result of improvements to the quality of teaching and provision in the early years, children thrive during their time in Reception. In 2016 and 2017, higher proportions of children reached a good level of development than found nationally by the end of Reception. This represents good improvement from the

time of the last inspection. Importantly, higher proportions of children achieved a good level of development in reading, writing and number in 2017. This is contributing to the good progress these pupils are now making in Year 1.

- I wanted to check how well teachers are ensuring that different groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the same good progress as their classmates. Numbers of pupils in each year group are low and vary year-on-year. Many pupils arrive at different times during their primary school years. It is, therefore, difficult to assess trends in pupils' achievements and groups of pupils' achievements compared to other pupils nationally. However, from their starting points, these pupils currently in the school are making similarly good progress as their peers.
- Good-quality teaching and targeted individual activities or small-group work are ensuring that most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make at least good progress in their learning. The progress that the last cohort of Year 6 pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics from their entry into Year 3 was outstanding. Inspection evidence suggests that the current Year 6 will make equally strong progress.
- The pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who are now in Year 3 made steady rather than good progress by the end of Year 2. Actions you and the special educational needs coordinator are taking this year are aimed at addressing this anomaly. You know that while most pupils achieve in line with the expectations for their age, not enough achieve at greater depth or more highly. This is because teachers do not set work that challenges the most able pupils consistently. Improving this area of the school's work is a priority this year. Governors are keeping a very close eye on the actions being taken and the impact of those actions.
- You have instilled in pupils a love of learning. Lessons are typified by strong and respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are keen and willing to learn. They are highly positive about the school. They talk enthusiastically about their work and about the especially interesting aspects of the broad and inviting curriculum that entice them into their learning and broaden their horizons.
- Pupils delighted in reporting on the interesting Viking who came from Jorvik last week to whet their appetites for their history project. They also explained how their recent visit to a Buddhist monastery helped them to think more about the world and helping one another. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. The work pupils undertake to respect and value the differences in others is notable. Pupils talked maturely about different types of families and how they try to ensure that everyone in school is treated equally. Displays showcase the wide-ranging work they have undertaken that recognises and celebrates their 'Equality Promise'.
- Attendance was also an area of focus because rates have been below average for some time. You have developed many strategies to ensure that parents send their children to school regularly and to remind parents of their responsibilities. Pupils really appreciate the regular rewards and celebration events that recognise their good attendance. Parents report that you are always 'on about attendance'. Despite this, rates, although rising, are still not average. You are continuing to

work with your parent support adviser and local authority staff to take action when attendance is not good enough and to discourage unauthorised holidays.

- Changes in governance since the last inspection have been managed well. There is now a more settled governing body. Governors are very well informed about what is working well and what needs to be better because of the high-quality, honest and evaluative reports you provide to them each term. They also visit regularly to monitor the school's work. Governors provide increasingly strong challenge to you and your middle leaders when areas of weakness are identified and then ensure that plans are amended to improve matters.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use the information they have about pupils' current skills and abilities to plan work that enables all pupils to make the best possible progress and achieve highly, particularly for the most able pupils in writing
- attendance rates continue to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the impact of actions you are taking to continue to improve the school. We observed learning together in all classes. In lessons we looked at pupils' workbooks and talked to pupils about their learning. I also looked at some pupils' workbooks from the last academic year. I held meetings with three representatives of the governing body and two local authority school improvement officers. I also held a meeting with the two assistant headteachers. I talked to pupils on the playground and formally to a group of key stage 2 pupils. The two written responses to Ofsted's parent survey were taken into account alongside the views of the 10 parents who spoke to me at the end of the day. The views of the four staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey were also considered along with the views of the 10 pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire. I scrutinised a number of documents, including a range of safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. I also reviewed your most recent headteacher's report to governors and minutes from recent governing body meetings.