

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 December 2017

Mrs Andrea Cox
Headteacher
Sedgefield Primary School
Rectory Row
Sedgefield
Stockton-on-Tees
County Durham
TS21 2BJ

Dear Mrs Cox

Short inspection of Sedgefield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Since the last inspection, you have provided strong, committed and perceptive leadership, which has driven the continuous development of the school. 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.

Your school provides a friendly, caring and nurturing environment where pupils thrive both personally and academically. You and your staff know pupils' individual learning and personal needs well and everyone is working hard to ensure that pupils achieve the best possible outcomes. Relationships between staff and pupils and pupils with their peers are superb across the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about your school. Many parents comment positively on the school's 'family feel' that makes their children feel valued, safe and cared for.

Leaders, staff and governors have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have also maintained the previously identified strengths.

The first area to tackle in the previous inspection report was to 'improve the quality of teaching at key stage 1 so that it is consistently good and a greater proportion is

outstanding'. You and your leaders check the quality of teaching using a range of approaches. Consequently, you have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. You promptly put in place training for all staff to ensure that the quality of teaching remains at a high standard. This results in pupils making good progress in key stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and greater depth by the end of key stage 1 was above the national average in writing and mathematics. While the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard was slightly below the national average, the proportion working at greater depth in reading was substantially above the national average. Where a small number of pupils' reading attainment needs to improve further you and your staff have taken steps to put in place additional support that is having a positive effect.

The second area to improve was to 'raise standards in literacy in the early years'. Teachers carefully plan opportunities for children in early years to develop their reading and writing skills. By the end of Reception, children have made good progress in developing their literacy skills. As a result, in 2017, the proportion of children who were working at the expected standards in reading and writing improved and was above that found nationally. Furthermore, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development improved to above that found nationally. As a result, an increasing number of children are well prepared for starting Year 1.

The third area to address was 'to refine school improvement plans in order to include clearly measurable targets, broken down into steps across the year; so that all leaders, including the governing body, know how quickly new initiatives are making a difference'. Your school improvement plan is detailed and it has well defined success measures. The timescale and systems for checking the effect of your plans are evident in the improvement plan and the schedule for monitoring and evaluation. Governors are involved effectively with the evaluation of the improvement plan. By working alongside other leaders, they regularly look for the impact of governors' strategic decisions as well as evaluating the effect of the improvement plan in practice.

The provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is a key strength of the school. Your curriculum, caring ethos and opportunities for responsibilities all help develop pupils' citizenship skills and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Your 'Family Groups', which engender in pupils qualities of care, thoughtfulness, respect and responsibility, underpin this work. The behaviour of your pupils is exemplary in lessons and around school. They show good manners, are friendly and are keen to share their learning. Your pupils enjoy school and they see it as a welcoming, friendly place, where everyone helps one another.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. They carry out appropriate checks for all staff,

governors and volunteers. 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. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You and your staff work effectively with parents and other agencies. You readily seek additional support for your pupils if they have specific needs. For example, you have introduced support from a school counsellor to promote the emotional needs of pupils where required.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' achievement in reading in key stage 2 is very strong. Consequently, over the last two years, by the end of Year 6, pupils' progress in reading has been significantly above that found nationally. Teachers use regular reading lessons effectively to develop pupils' reading comprehension skills. Opportunities to read to adults both at home and in school ensure that pupils practise reading and extend their love of literature.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. By the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who attain the expected standard and greater depth in mathematics is above the averages found nationally. Similarly, by the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in mathematics is above the national average.
- Your deputy headteacher who is the leader for English has a good understanding of the priorities for improvement in this subject. The actions she has taken have had a considerable effect on improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils working at both the expected standard and the higher standard were above national averages.
- Although pupils make good progress in writing overall, by the end of Year 6 they do not consistently make the same very high levels of progress that they achieve in reading. The deputy headteacher has now turned her attention to improving pupils' progress in writing further. Her plans clearly identify how you will continue to focus on improving pupils' writing and to check for improvement.
- Following training from your deputy headteacher, your staff have begun to use approaches that encourage pupils to use their writing skills creatively and with greater expression. Teachers are encouraging pupils to use exciting and rich vocabulary. You have developed the use of 'talk partners' to encourage pupils to increase the imaginative aspects of their writing. Your pupils value this approach. During our visits to classrooms and reviewing samples of pupils' books, we identified evidence that teachers are starting these approaches successfully. However, on some occasions pupils' writing work was set in context or with success measures that limited their opportunities to demonstrate their writing ability fully. Furthermore, some pupils' writing in other subjects does not reflect the standards found in English books.
- The proportion of your pupils who achieve the expected standard on the phonics screening check is generally above that found nationally. In 2016, the school's results fell below the national average. You and your staff have responded promptly to this and in 2017 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected

standard returned to above the national average. Furthermore, you continue to provide additional teaching for any pupils who have not demonstrated secure phonics knowledge. These pupils are showing good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders, including governors responded promptly to the prospect of creating a nursery class in early years for September 2017. The community has appreciated this and several parents commented positively about this provision. Leaders and staff have researched effective practice through visits to other schools both within the local authority and beyond. Guidance from the local authority education development adviser (EDA) has assisted staff to establish provision with appropriate coverage of the early years curriculum.
- You and your staff recognise the need to continue to evaluate and develop this new development in early years. Leaders have organised further local authority EDA support. During our visit to early years classrooms, we identified that sometimes adults do not engage children sufficiently with their learning when children choose from the available activities.
- The overwhelming responses from parents were positive about the school. The key characteristics that please parents are the care, nurture and personal development provided by staff. Parents also highlighted the high standards of pupils' behaviour and the good academic progress made by their children. A small minority of parents raised concerns about how the school deals with bullying. During the inspection, I considered the views of pupils throughout the day and considered their responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Your pupils have a good understanding of what bullying means. Many pupils believe that there is no bullying in your school. Others believe that when it does happen staff deal with it well. My review of your records of bullying show that incidents are rare and that leaders and staff take appropriate action to deal with these. This includes meeting with parents and providing appropriate support for the pupils involved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve by implementing leaders' plans to develop pupils' writing creativity and expression further
- the recently introduced early years developments are embedded to achieve the aspirations of leaders and governors to provide children with the highest-quality Nursery and Reception provision.

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

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, your deputy headteacher and your leader for mathematics and early years. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, 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 74 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed the 15 responses to the staff survey. Along with you, I visited five classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' English work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time and listened to some pupils read in class. I considered information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying.