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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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8 February 2018

Mr Peter Nord
Headteacher
Bamburgh School
Norham Avenue
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 7TD

Dear Mr Nord

Short inspection of Bamburgh School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Joan Hewitt, 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With your governors, you have taken action to address the areas for improvement noted in the previous inspection report.

You work with determination, with governors and your senior leadership team, to improve provision and outcomes for pupils in your care. You accurately identify the strengths of the school and those areas that need further improvement. You are clear about how you and other leaders set about bringing about those changes to support further improvement.

Staff are committed and hard-working. They are determined to do their best for the pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their experience of school life. Parents and carers have well-justified confidence that the staff, together with you and other senior leaders, keep their children safe and help them to flourish.

You have set about developing the curriculum so that it meets the very varying needs of your pupils. As a consequence, pupils enjoy a wide range of learning opportunities. These support their personal development and the development of basic skills in number and communication in particular. The breadth of the curriculum provides a wealth of further opportunities that support pupils' preparation for living and the next stage of their education and training. Pupils are proud to be members of the school and value the support they receive 'to be

themselves'.

The recent introduction of the 'forest school' has enhanced learning further. Staff work with one another to ensure that forest-school learning is linked to their current topics and so enhances learning taking place in the classroom.

Alongside the development work on the curriculum, you have put in place a recording system that tracks pupils' progress from their entry into the school. In response to previous areas for improvement, the 'Bamburgh preferred method' provides staff and pupils with clear, small steps for improvement towards pupils' individual targets. This supports staff in planning learning that meets pupils' needs. Pupils know what is expected of them. You use the system with other senior leaders and governors to evaluate how well pupils make progress, particularly in core subjects. Leaders recognise that further work is required to make full use of the tracking system to enhance the recording of progress across the range of foundation subjects.

Through your monitoring work, you check with other leaders that teachers and classroom staff are using information about pupils' progress to plan and deliver engaging and interesting lessons. During our visit to lessons, we observed pupils working individually with support and in small groups. This helps pupils to develop their confidence as learners. However, staff occasionally miss opportunities to move learning forward at appropriate moments. Staff use pupils' responses well to identify pupils' misconceptions. However, they use pupils' responses less consistently to deepen their thinking.

Governors know the school well. They know what needs to be done to take the next steps for further improvement. They are well informed and agree the priorities for the school based on the school's accurate self-assessment. Governors share a common vision with you to promote pupils' personal development and well-being alongside their achievement. They challenge you and your senior leaders to continue the process of improvement to meet their aspirations for pupils. However, planning is not as sharp as it could be because there are too few quantifiable measures for success. This limits the rigour with which they can hold you to account and the speed with which they can pursue further improvement. Nevertheless, their determination for the school to provide the best possible education for all its pupils sustains the whole staff's efforts.

With you, governors have taken steps to ensure that focused support and challenge are improving pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. The use of subject specialists in core subjects, working alongside phase leaders, is bringing about better rates of progress for pupils. This also supports improvement in the quality of teaching. You support staff to attend local and regional networking events to develop their practice further. You use moderation activities to develop a deeper understanding of pupils' achievements.

Safeguarding is effective.

You work with governors and staff to ensure that the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and safeguard them are fit for purpose. The school carries out the required pre-employment checks on staff and records them carefully. By ensuring that all concerns are recorded, appropriate staff are well placed to provide early help. Staff work with a range of other agencies and teams to support pupils and families.

You work hard with staff to ensure that pupils attend regularly. This helps them to benefit from the full range of learning opportunities that contribute to their safety and well-being. In age-appropriate ways, pupils learn about how to keep safe, for example when they use the internet or other digital technologies. Pupils know that it is important to keep their personal details safe. Every pupil inspectors talked with confirmed that they felt safe because they see staff as adults they trust and with whom they can talk if they have a concern or worry. Parents, too, spoke highly of the level of care that staff give to their children.

Inspection findings

- There is a strong culture of safeguarding because staff understand the central importance of keeping pupils safe. Staff training is a constant priority, ensuring that they know the signs of abuse and neglect. As a result, staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have a concern. Governors and leaders understand that regular attendance at school is an important aspect of safeguarding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils' learning and emotional needs well. They plan lessons carefully to meet those needs. Teaching assistants are deployed well. They support pupils' learning effectively. Strong, positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to pupils' progress. However, occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to use pupils' responses to move them on quickly when they are ready to do so. Pupils do not have frequent opportunities to consolidate and sharpen their writing skills in a wider range of subjects.
- Pupils in the primary and secondary phases make good progress across a wider range of subjects overall. However, progress is not as consistently strong as it is in English and mathematics because progression in subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding is less well developed.
- Children in the early years are well supported to develop communication, personal and social skills. They make good progress.
- The school's work to develop a coherent curriculum and target-setting system supports teachers' planning. Leaders and governors are able to keep a sharp eye on pupils' progress, especially in the core subjects. As a consequence, high proportions of pupils make good and better progress.
- Attendance rates are above national averages for special schools. The proportion of pupils who do not attend regularly enough is lower than the national average. Nevertheless, leaders keep a firm focus on reducing absence further. However, leaders do not yet cross-reference patterns of absence with behaviour records.

- Leaders and governors consistently seek to find ways to improve the school further. They have addressed the areas for improvement noted at the previous inspection effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school makes more detailed use of analysis and evaluation of different groups of pupils in respect of attendance and behavioural incidents
- planning for further improvement is supported by quantifiable targets for success
- the school analyses the quality of learning across the whole curriculum with the same precision as in English and mathematics, particularly for the most able, and increases the opportunities for pupils' writing in foundation subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Campbell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body. We talked with pupils and observed them during the course of the school day. We observed learning in lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. We considered pupils' views and those of your staff and parents. We evaluated the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe. We scrutinised a range of other documents. These included records of pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and the school's plans for improvement.