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12 March 2018

Mrs Caroline Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Taylor

Short inspection of Barley Fields Primary

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018 with Dawn Foster, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Since the last inspection, the school has grown substantially. Following your appointment in September 2016, you have formed a new, highly skilled, senior leadership team. You have deepened and strengthened leadership capacity by appointing and developing middle leaders with clear responsibilities for each key stage. Your whole leadership team has worked together to maintain the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and to ensure that every pupil is valued and cared for.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching further so that it would become consistently outstanding. Despite significant increases in pupil numbers and changes to staffing since that time, leaders have pursued this goal relentlessly. Teachers value the wide range of opportunities you have provided to hone and develop their skills. Teaching is effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their strong questioning probes pupils' understanding and deepens their learning.

Pupils value the helpful guidance they are given by their teachers. They act on advice in order to improve their work. Pupils are confident in their learning because they have clear strategies on how to be successful and achieve well. Boys and girls talk enthusiastically about how they prepare for writing activities and they confidently discuss approaches to solving mathematical problems.

As at the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and their love of learning is tangible. Pupils are extremely proud of their work and their school. They

listen carefully to each other's views and are very polite, considerate and courteous. Pupils conduct themselves with care around the school and there is no boisterous behaviour indoors.

I was keen to see how you are improving the achievements of the most able pupils in key stage 2, especially in reading. You have carefully analysed and considered the strengths and weaknesses of how reading is taught and made important changes. As a result, you are improving pupils' reading speed, comprehension skills and especially their confidence. You ensure that they have access to a wide range of authors and genres, commensurate to their abilities and interests. Work in pupils' books together with assessment information confirms that they are making strong progress. You know there is still more to do to ensure that all pupils make excellent progress from their varied starting points.

At the time of the last inspection, children in the early years made good progress. Given the substantial growth in numbers, I was interested to see if progress remained good. This is indeed the case. Children delight in learning. They show particular strengths in the development of their phonic skills and in their early reading and writing. Children enjoy the many rich learning activities available to them both indoors and outdoors. They readily explore their environment, develop their language skills and learn together through imaginative play.

Governors know the school well. They are delighted with the strong team spirit which underpins the work of your leadership team. Governors check things out for themselves through regular visits to the school and are able to provide you with both strong support and constructive challenge.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. You know exactly what needs to be done to improve teaching further so that it is consistently highly effective. You know that time is needed to embed the many recent developments to the curriculum, especially in reading, so that progress over time is both substantial and sustained. You recognise clearly that the most able pupils are capable of responding to higher challenge and making even greater progress. You are not afraid to try out new approaches to learning in your pursuit of an excellent education for all your pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures to keep pupils safe are precise, clear and well documented. Information is shared appropriately and carefully. A strong culture of safeguarding pervades the school. Staff know what to do if they are concerned that a pupil may be at risk of harm. You work effectively, in partnership with the local authority and multi-agency teams, to provide timely support for pupils and their families when they are in need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations including when using the internet. They say that they feel very safe in the school. They are

adamant that there is absolutely no bullying of any kind.

Pupils' attendance is above average. The school has worked effectively with a small minority of pupils and their families to significantly improve their attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Inspection findings

- You have developed your middle leaders well. They work successfully with staff to create strong teams in each key stage. Expertise and resources are readily shared to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are enthusiastic about the training they have attended, especially regarding new approaches to developing reading and writing. They are applying the learning from such training to good effect in the classroom.
- Leaders use assessment data carefully to identify pupils who are struggling and then intervene swiftly to help them make good progress. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning so that they can support staff where needed. Internal assessments show the strength of pupils' progress in all year groups.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully with high expectations of learning. You are aware that, on occasions, lesson time could be used more effectively and that challenge, especially for the most able pupils, could be even higher.
- You have made improvements to the quality of teaching of mathematics and embedded a new curriculum, full of rich opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to reasoning and problem-solving. The last cohort of Years 2 and 6 pupils reached standards that were above national averages. However, the progress that pupils made from their starting points was average. As a result of the improvements made to the teaching of mathematics this year, pupils' progress is hastening and is now strong in all year groups.
- You have adopted a systematic approach to writing which develops pupils' confidence and skills. It helps them to plan how to write both independently and at length. The last cohort of Years 2 and 6 pupils reached standards well above national averages and pupils made good progress from their starting points. Writing is quickly becoming a real strength in all year groups, including in the early years provision. Here, children were observed confidently writing phonetically plausible sentences and stories. They were also able to read over their work to check for meaning and make any required corrections.
- You have rightly invested time and effort in analysing reading results from national curriculum tests. The last cohort of Years 2 and 6 pupils made average progress overall. However, the progress of the most able pupils in Year 6 was well below that expected and they struggled to reach the standards of which they were capable. You have now significantly enhanced the teaching of reading. Pupils read widely and often. Some of the most able pupils are now reading texts that are very advanced for their years. You are rightly developing pupils' understanding of texts and their speed and accuracy in reading. Inspection evidence shows strong progress in pupils' reading skills in all year groups and, importantly, a real and tangible love of reading is evident throughout the school.

- In the early years, pupils thrive. Real pleasure in reading and writing is shared by both boys and girls. Children's spoken language skills are very well developed and their behaviour is exceptional. They follow instructions carefully and enjoy a very wide range of interesting learning activities.
- Pupils in this school enjoy learning. They are proud of their school. High-quality displays throughout the school serve to celebrate their learning. Many parents comment on the caring, family atmosphere. Parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make important observations about the high quality of care and support that has helped their children to make good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the development of highly effective teaching continues to be a priority so that more pupils will make substantial and sustained progress over time in all areas of learning
- the reading strategies that have recently been put in place are fully embedded, so that all pupils, including the most able, will continue to develop confidence and a deep understanding of wide ranging, high-quality texts.

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

Yours sincerely

Janice Gorch
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, the inspection team met with you, your senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of teachers, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a local authority representative. The inspection team visited lessons to observe learning with yourself and the senior team and we also examined pupils' books in a range of subjects. We talked to pupils during lessons and met formally with a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils. We listened to pupils from Years 2, 5 and 6 read. We scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, information about pupils' current progress, external evaluations of the school's work, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents related to safeguarding. I also examined the 135 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 64 written comments from parents. No pupils or staff responded to Ofsted's pupil survey.