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Mrs Susan Davis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davis

Short inspection of Birkby Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2018, 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have demonstrated high-quality leadership skills by building a strong and dynamic management team. Your leadership team is competent and effective. Over 50% of your teaching team members are new to your school since the last inspection. New teachers are guided well and are already demonstrating that they are skilled in teaching. The local authority recognises and uses the skills your team has, in developing good-quality teaching in other schools. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased and a new building has been built.

Your governors take a very active and influential role in school improvement. They are well informed by you and your senior leaders and use this information to question what is happening in school and what could be improved. They have a range of different skills gathered from their various jobs and life experiences, which they use well to support the school. The local authority has formed good relationships with you and your team. It has every confidence in the school's leadership team and uses its skills throughout the authority to support school improvement.

The areas of improvement raised at the last inspection have been dealt with well. However, leaders recognise that advances in pupils' progress and attainment in reading need to be maintained and improved upon.

Pupils say how much they love their school. They are respectful and proud of the well-maintained and cared-for environment in which they learn. The many new pupils say how they are quickly made to feel welcome and other pupils say how nice it is that more friends are continuing to join their school. A handful of parents and carers responded to the text questionnaire. The majority commented on how well the school staff care for and educate their children.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all staff are well informed and know exactly whom to turn to if they have any concerns. The staff I spoke to considered that their opinions and concerns are always valued. They also said that pupils were respectful to all staff, regardless of their status in the school. Four trained safeguarding leads take ultimate responsibility for pupils' welfare. Their photographs and guidance about reporting any concerns are clearly noted on posters around the school, on the school's website and on the regular school newsletters. You ensure that any records of incidents are carefully documented and are stored confidentially. The leadership team has ensured that these and all other safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and all staff read and know this policy and the up-to-date, relevant information it gives them. Several staff have received safer recruitment training, and recruitment checks and induction procedures are thorough. Pupils say that they feel safe and know that adults will help to resolve any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have concentrated a great deal of resources on improving the reading skills of pupils. There is clear evidence that this investment has improved the quality of pupils' reading skills, particularly of those in Year 6 and of those who are disadvantaged. However, senior leaders recognise that these improvements need to be sustained and improved further across the school. Pupils have a wealth of relevant reading material to choose from. Many pupils are beginning to love reading so much that they take books outside to read at breaktimes. There is an emphasis on developing fluent reading skills and on improving pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. This is done through displays, reading corners and a well-stocked library, as well as strategies that have been introduced in lessons. Pupils proudly announce that they have won the Kirklees World Book Day quiz for the last three years, as a direct result of the emphasis on reading throughout the school. Teachers, all whom have taken part in further training to enhance the teaching of reading, ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to read to an adult so that their reading skills can develop more quickly.
- Senior leaders have successfully used new strategies that have ensured that pupils' attendance is now in line with that of other primary schools nationally. The team has analysed trends so that parents and pupils can be supported and guided to understand the importance of children's regular attendance at school. Parent workshops and parents' evenings, as well as home visits and assemblies, all help to establish how important regular attendance is to pupils' emotional and

academic needs. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased significantly over the last two years.

- Senior leaders' careful evaluation and use of the pupil premium funding have ensured that the attendance and academic progress of disadvantaged pupils have improved at a faster rate than those of other pupils in the school. A range of effective strategies is used to support these pupils. Pupils, both higher and lower attainers, take part in small-group lessons so that their progress is accelerated. Staff monitor learning that takes place in these small-group lessons to ensure that they are making a difference. Pupil progress meetings take place every term between teachers and senior leaders. At these meetings, teachers are held to account for the progress of these pupils and pupils' needs are identified.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times of the school day is very good. All staff have high expectations and expect pupils and adults to be respectful and courteous at all times. This leads to the development of excellent relationships between pupils and their peers and adults. Pupils maintain this high standard of behaviour when they are off the school premises. This is confirmed by letters received, for example from fellow passengers on the train pupils travelled on to and from London, who took the time to write to the school to comment on the pupils' politeness and excellent relationships. Although reported incidents of poor behaviour are higher for boys than they are for girls, this gap has closed considerably in the last 12 months as the number of recorded incidents has fallen by at least 30%. The number of pupils excluded from school both permanently and for a fixed period, although low previously, has been zero for this academic year. Pupils take on a range of different responsibilities including, for example, selling fruit at the tuck shop at breaktime. They do this with pride, confidence and efficiency.
- A high number of pupils join the school with little or no English and sometimes with little or no previous experience of education. These pupils generally join the school at times other than those normally expected, and some have spent little time in the school before moving on to the next stage of their education. An additional needs team works well with outside agencies, including the local authority learning partner, to ensure that the needs of these pupils and their parents are well met. A specialist and specially trained team of teaching assistants work with senior leaders to plan a personalised curriculum to meet pupils' needs. They use well-chosen resources such as digital tablets to help pupils learn. Teachers plan displays and activities so that the wide range of cultures and religions apparent in the school is celebrated to help new pupils settle in. Case studies of individual pupils show how generally these pupils, while having low prior attainment, make good and better progress.
- School leaders and teachers plan learning so that it is both culturally relevant to pupils, as well as giving them new first-hand experiences of life in Britain. Regular theme days are planned to help pupils learn about Britain today and its history. Pupils are encouraged to be aspirational by visiting local universities and taking part in enterprise weeks. Visitors who come into school give pupils a wide range of experiences such as a pop-up planetarium and Indian drummers who helped pupils learn about Indian soldiers in the Second World War. Adults make sure that this rich curriculum extends beyond lesson times, as pupils have access

to between 26 and 30 different clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the current rates of pupils' progress in reading continue to be improved upon, so that their progress in reading is more in line with nationally average outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Sharpe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed pupils' learning and behaviour in all year groups and considered learning in pupils' workbooks. I met with many pupils and spoke to them about a range of issues, including the work in their books. During the day, I held meetings with your senior management team. I also met with a representative of the local authority and some members of your governing body. I spoke to several staff and observed pupils' behaviour at different times of the school day. Nine parents responded to Ofsted's free-text facility and staff responded to the staff questionnaire; these responses were considered. Not enough parents responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, for the responses to be considered. No pupils responded to the pupil questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation so that I could consider the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, leadership and management, pupils' progress and your evaluation of the quality of teaching.