

1 May 2018

Mrs Karen Beattie
Headteacher
Netherton Infant and Nursery School
Netherton Moor Road
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Dear Mrs Beattie

Short inspection of Netherton Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 November 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 created a positive learning culture through your intent to share responsibilities, increase accountability and give staff ownership of systems and routines. As a result, staff morale is high and, together, you take collective responsibility for improving pupils' outcomes. You are determined that pupils are at the heart of the school. Staff know every pupil as an individual and take a personalised approach to meeting their differing needs. There is a strong sense of community and belonging which parents and carers value highly.

Other than a dip in 2016, standards, on the whole, have remained positive over time by the end of each key stage, and across the school current pupils are making good progress. You have developed a wide range of leaders who are becoming increasingly competent and who have secured many improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, at the end of early years, in the Year 1 phonics screening check, and at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics, standards improved in 2017 to at least in line with the national average. Leaders have also been effective in addressing the areas for improvement which were identified at the last inspection. For example, teachers are adept at adjusting their teaching during lessons and providing feedback to pupils to help them move on quickly with their learning and avoid repeated mistakes.

Governors provide effective support and challenge. Their knowledge about the school is reinforced through their regular visits and involvement in school life. They

are keen to listen to the views of parents, pupils and staff to help them gain a thorough understanding of what is working well and how the school could improve even further. They set challenging targets for your performance management, and these are linked with the performance targets of all staff in school. This is ensuring that the whole school community is highly focused on the same priorities. Leaders and governors work closely together to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions. You are ambitious in your aims for pupils and are aware of the work still to do to enable a greater proportion of them to exceed the standards expected nationally by the end of each key stage.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. You have been committed to building strong relationships with families, particularly those facing challenging or complex circumstances. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are clear about safeguarding procedures as a result of the training they receive. Staff report concerns quickly, and leaders respond with urgency.

Pupils say that behaviour is usually very good and that they trust that adults will sort out any incidents of misbehaviour. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have ensured that self-evaluation procedures accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. The early years leader has a secure understanding of children's stages of development on entry to the school and as they progress through Nursery and Reception. She is then using this information to identify priorities for improvement and children's next steps for learning. As a result of effective leadership, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception is improving over time and has been above the national average in 2016 and 2017. However, the proportion of children who exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception is declining. You have already identified this priority for improvement and are pinpointing where teaching could provide further challenge in a bid to reverse the trend.
- Leaders have prioritised the teaching of phonics. Support and development have resulted in staff being more confident in their phonics teaching. Daily phonics sessions each morning, with additional support for individuals who are not on track, are making sure that teaching pupils to read has a high profile throughout the school. Teachers carry out routine assessments, and the groups in which pupils are taught change regularly to ensure that teaching is closely matched to pupils' developing phonics knowledge. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' reading. They have set more challenging targets for achievement in phonics by the end of Reception in order to support more pupils to be ready for their learning in Year 1. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has generally been in line with national averages, despite a dip in 2016. All pupils usually meet the standard by

the end of Year 2. The Year 2 pupils who did not meet the standard by the end of Year 1 in 2017 are making strong progress this year. However, leaders are not complacent and recognise that there is more to do to enable even more pupils to reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1. When hearing pupils read, it became apparent that reading books are not matched precisely to the sounds that pupils are currently learning and the phonics knowledge they have already acquired. This prevents them from being really successful in their reading. Additionally, pupils do not always re-read their books in the early stages of learning to read. As a result, those pupils who are struggling are not building their confidence and fluency quickly enough. You are eager to address this, so that all pupils get off to a flying start with reading.

- You took immediate action to address the disappointing dip in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You sought advice and support from the local authority and local school partnerships. This made sure that staff had a clear understanding of the more ambitious expectations for the end of key stage 1. Teachers throughout school also became increasingly accurate and confident in making assessments of pupils' learning. Consequently, in Year 2 in 2017, attainment improved in reading, writing and mathematics so that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was at least in line with or above the national average. However, you are aware that pupils' attainment was not as strong as others nationally with the same starting points. In particular, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard, although improved from 2016, remained just below the national average. Work in lessons and pupils' books shows that tasks are accurately pitched to pupils' needs. Leaders were able to identify where the actions that they have taken are now having a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils are more frequently reasoning and solving problems, which is supporting them in developing a firm understanding of the concepts covered. Carefully planned sequences of learning, tailored to pupils' differing stages of development, are contributing to strong progress for current pupils, including the most able.
- You have developed effective systems to help you track the progress of individual pupils and make sure that they are achieving as well as they should. Therefore, teachers are very confident about identifying pupils' next steps and where any additional intervention is required. Governors and leaders make sure that the pupil premium funding is providing disadvantaged pupils with effective support. However, leaders recognise that while they have an in-depth awareness of individual pupils' attainment and progress, they would also benefit from having a leadership overview of assessment information. This would help them in spotting any emerging patterns for cohorts, subjects or groups of pupils.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is consistently better than national averages. However, in 2017, disadvantaged pupils' attendance was below average, with too many disadvantaged pupils regularly absent. Leaders demonstrate that they are quick to address any emerging concerns about pupils' attendance and have introduced a tighter procedure for dealing with pupil absence this year. As a result, punctuality has been given a boost and attendance for disadvantaged pupils is showing strong improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils exceed the standards expected nationally by the end of each key stage in reading, writing and mathematics
- pupils at the early stages of learning to read, and particularly those who are not on track, have books which are matched to their phonics knowledge, and that those pupils have opportunities to re-read these books to develop confidence and fluency
- leaders make sharper use of attainment and progress information to identify any patterns for particular cohorts, subjects or groups of pupils.

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

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, and the English and mathematics leaders. I also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair, and I spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' attainment and progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. Together with the English and mathematics subject leaders, we scrutinised the work of a sample of pupils. I listened to five pupils read. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 56 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.