

14 May 2018

Miss M Purdy
Headteacher
Seaburn Dene Primary School
Torver Crescent
Seaburn Dene
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR6 8LG

Dear Miss Purdy

Short inspection of Seaburn Dene Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 June 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 and your team have created a culture of continuous improvement; you do all you can to support pupils to thrive. Staff confirm that your encouragement, support for career development and commitment to ensuring that the school improves have enabled them to become more effective. For example, a recent focus on science included staff training that has increased their confidence in teaching the subject. Your support is complemented by regular monitoring of the school's work so that you can use the knowledge you gain to help staff to become even more effective.

You and your team regularly check the progress of pupils through sampling their work in books, making visits to classrooms and observing teaching. You use this information to act promptly, providing pupils with additional support that helps them to maintain good progress.

You and the governing body have made carefully considered plans to ensure that the school continues to develop after your impending retirement. You have provided appropriate support and mentoring to your successor. You have worked closely with governors to ensure that those undertaking new leadership responsibilities are provided with suitable training to understand their roles. You have effectively enabled middle leaders to develop their areas of responsibility and to play an important role in improving teaching through their monitoring and support to individuals. A review of the school's vision and commitment to the education of the whole child has created a platform for continuity and further development.

You, staff and governors are unswerving in your aim of ensuring that pupils receive an education that equips them with the knowledge, skills and experiences to be well-rounded, confident individuals. You have created a well-structured curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge in academic subjects such as English and mathematics, but also provides pupils with a rich range of other opportunities. For example, pupils enjoy the use of an outdoor gym and stilts at playtime, have the chance to learn to play a musical instrument and visit an art gallery, and take part in one of the many lunchtime and after-school clubs. Events such as Rainbow Day help to raise pupils' awareness of diversity.

At the last inspection, you were asked to develop and deepen pupils' mathematical skills and ensure that the most able pupils were sufficiently challenged in that subject. This has largely been tackled successfully. The mathematics leader is fully aware of where inconsistencies occur and action is taking place to deal with them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate systems are in place to keep pupils safe. These systems are regularly checked and updated where necessary to ensure that they remain suitable. Staff are clear about the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a child. Careful records are maintained. Safeguarding leaders attend regular training so they remain up to date. Weekly staff briefings, alongside timely training, maintain staff awareness and understanding of the importance of safeguarding. Leaders are committed to working with a range of partner agencies to support the welfare of pupils and their families where necessary.

Pupils say that behaviour in school and in the playground is good most of the time and that they feel safe in school. Parents and carers endorse this. School records confirm that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. When poor behaviour occurs, pupils say that it is dealt with promptly. Sanctions are applied consistently and appropriately. External expertise is used to train staff and help the small number of pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of online dangers and how they can combat them. They know that they should not provide information that makes them easily identifiable or share passwords. Visitors to school help pupils understand how to stay safe on railways, for example.

Inspection findings

- As well as looking at the performance of the most able pupils in mathematics in key stage 2, I wanted to check that this group of pupils were challenged sufficiently to write as well as they are capable of in key stage 1 and in early years. This was because for the last three years, the proportions of children reaching the higher standard in writing at the end of Reception Year were below average. Proportions reaching the higher standard at the end of key stage 1 were also below average in 2017. The leader of early years has already begun to make changes to help children's writing, with a small increase in the proportion of children now on track to attain the higher standard this

year. However, the scrutiny of work in children's books that we conducted confirmed that changes have not yet made a significant difference, and expectations of the most able children are still not always high enough. They are not challenged to write as much or as well as they are capable of. They learn how to write sentences using basic letters and sounds, but are supported too closely and are not expected to write more than that often enough.

- In key stage 1, there are some inconsistencies in expectations of the most able pupils' spelling and in how much they are capable of writing. This hampers their ability to consistently reach the highest standards.
- Pupils' mathematical understanding has improved. In most classes, all pupils, including the most able, frequently solve problems that require them to think more deeply, enhancing their mathematical understanding. Leaders know this approach is not yet consistent throughout the school. In some classes, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to deepen their understanding. They spend too long completing calculations which they can already do rather than tackling more challenging problems. Where this is the case, the most able pupils in particular are not stretched.
- The governing body remains effective. Governors have taken a number of steps to help them to be more effective and efficient in carrying out their duties and holding leaders to account. An audit of their skills helped to ensure that new governors with the right skills were recruited and deployed appropriately. For example, the recently appointed safeguarding governor has a wealth of knowledge and experience in this area. Both the chair and vice-chair have attended training to help them to understand their roles and responsibilities fully. Other training has been attended to enhance governors' knowledge. Good use is made of external expertise. A professional clerk is employed to minute meetings and to ensure that governors comply with statutory duties. A consultant provides advice about managing your performance. Minutes confirm that governors provide appropriate challenge to school leaders. However, their lack of clarity about the outcomes from the school's assessment system means that their knowledge and understanding of the most able pupils' performance are not yet secure.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding, which is overseen by a newly appointed leader. She has systematically reviewed the performance and progress of each pupil entitled to support through this funding. She has identified what needs to be done to help each individual succeed academically, socially and personally. School performance information and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that this group of pupils are progressing at the same rate as other pupils and they are now reaching similar standards. Rates of persistent absence are still higher than average for this group of pupils. However, as a result of actions that have already been taken, repeated absence is now decreasing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans are implemented to ensure that the most able pupils:
 - are consistently challenged to think more deeply in mathematics in key stage 2
 - are given opportunities to write as much as they are capable of and use correct

spelling of frequently used words in early years and key stage 1

- governors have a clear understanding of the performance of the most able pupils so that they can provide well-focused challenge and support to school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Waugh
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the business manager and the designated leader for safeguarding. I also met a group of staff. You and I visited lessons in all classes. I met with a group of three governors and spoke with an external consultant who has supported the school. I spoke with pupils about their views of the school, including their views of pupils' behaviour. I looked in pupils' workbooks when in lessons. Some pupils read their work to me. I also conducted a work scrutiny with the deputy headteacher, the mathematics leader and the leader for early years. I considered the 79 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental survey. Various documents were considered relating to safeguarding, teaching, and governance. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and the tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments and I looked at the school's website.