

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 May 2018

Mrs Sarah Nordstrom
Headteacher
Easington Lane Primary School
High Street
Easington Lane
Houghton le Spring
Tyne and Wear
DH5 0JT

Dear Mrs Nordstrom

Short inspection of Easington Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 February 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 ensured that there are now significant strengths in leadership right across the school and have been honest and frank about the school's strengths and areas to improve. Your rigorous and robust self-evaluation forms the basis for detailed plans to make further improvements. You have provided a steady and experienced hand in guiding the school through a period of instability in staffing and leadership. Your inspirational and all-encompassing drive and ambition to provide the very best for pupils is infectious. It is clearly reflected in other leaders, governors, teachers and teaching assistants. You have established a dedicated, thoughtful and hard-working senior management team, all skilfully driving improvements in their own area of responsibility. The members of the knowledgeable and passionate governing body are highly motivated to enhance their own effectiveness, and the school business manager plays a key and positive role in many aspects of school life.

There is a continuing drive to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential, especially academically, by making the maximum possible progress from their starting points. Over time, pupils have achieved very well, especially at the end of Year 6. In published data, the proportion of pupils reaching standards expected for their age or working at a greater depth of learning has been above that found nationally. The school is regularly in the top 20% of all schools nationally for progress made across key stage 2, especially in reading and mathematics. The

proportion of children reaching a good level of development in early years from their low starting points has been steadily rising and now matches that found nationally. You have worked hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the same life chances as other pupils. As a result, the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and both their classmates and other pupils nationally is diminishing quickly, and indeed is reversed in some year groups. Some differences still do remain, however, as disadvantaged pupils' progress is behind others.

You have effectively addressed areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result of consistently good teaching, the standards pupils attain have risen considerably. Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting pupils' learning and play a key role in school. You are committed to ensuring that pupils have the necessary skills and knowledge to make a flying start to their next phase of education. This includes improving pupils' rates of attendance, which have risen considerably over the course of this academic year. A range of rewards and incentives to attend school are bearing fruit, although a number of pupils still take unauthorised holidays in term time. Leaders and teachers have also reviewed and adapted the school's curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of pupils. 'WOW' weeks at the start of each topic hook pupils' interests and engagement in learning. New systems are in place to assess pupils' progress against subject-specific skills. You acknowledge that the tracking of this assessment information is yet to be embedded.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governor safeguarding training is up to date, including training to ensure that recruitment procedures are watertight. All procedures and records are of good quality and are regularly updated and reviewed by the senior leadership team. The meticulous approach of the school business manager ensures that records and documents are of high quality. An extensive and detailed online system ensures that absolutely nothing is missed that could compromise pupils' safety and well-being.

All staff are vigilant and quick to raise any issue or concern. Senior leaders ensure that discussion around concerns is a standing agenda item at every leadership meeting. Access to well-written policies and guidance ensures that all adults have a secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. Work completed by the attendance leader and school business manager is having a significantly positive impact on pupils' well-being and attendance. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety. Pupils have full trust in their teachers and teaching assistants who look after them and report feeling safe all of the time. They are especially knowledgeable about keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- Ensuring pupils' safety and personal development has been one of your highest priorities. There is a tangible commitment to the all-round development and well-being of every single pupil, including enabling them to flourish academically. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated, staff training completed and systems to report and record any concerns enhanced. All staff contribute by reporting even the smallest concern regarding a child's well-being, providing an accurate history and a chronology of events. Behaviour logs are detailed and cross-referenced to any other reported concerns. Pupils respect and value others, as seen in the filming and production of their successful DVD on 'diversity'. They report feeling very safe while in school, a view endorsed by their parents in response to the school questionnaire with comments such as 'it is a fantastic school' and 'I am very grateful for what this school does for me'.
- Over time, there have been a wide range of support programmes for pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning, including for disadvantaged pupils. Following careful analysis by the school business manager, the effectiveness of actions taken using funding from the pupil premium grant are scrutinised carefully alongside accurate costings. Support programmes are delivered by skilled teaching assistants and teachers. Other help for pupils at risk of falling behind includes support for pupils who have not grasped the important learning from the day.
- You acknowledge that in some areas of school differences still remain in the rates of progress and standards of achievement made by disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils nationally, and compared to their classmates. It is clear from work seen in books and your own robust assessment information that these differences are quickly diminishing as the quality of teaching in lessons continually improves.
- You have in place a team of adults in school that shares the same ambition to maintain a cycle of continual improvement for the benefit of pupils. Staff morale is buoyant. A shared driven work ethic is tangible. An ongoing review and development of the curriculum has led to an overhaul and change of direction. All teachers now plan both coverage and exciting, engaging, unique learning experiences collectively. 'WOW' weeks capture not only pupils' fascination and attention, but also that of many parents. Learning is supported by real-life experiences, including visits to places of local and national importance and interest. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at assessing pupils' progress against key national curriculum objectives and subject-specific skills in creative and foundation subjects. However, tracking of this assessment information is not yet fully developed. As such, analysis of pupils' progress is limited, and gaps in learning not yet fully identified.
- All leaders have worked hard over a period of time to address issues of low attendance and persistent absence for a significant minority of pupils. Strategies appear to be bearing fruit as parents are realising that missing school even for a short time can harm their child's learning. The school business manager and attendance leader rigorously track absences, and respond quickly the same day if a child is absent from school. A wide range of rewards and incentives are in place

for pupils to attend, although some parents are still deciding to take holidays in term time. Rates of attendance have been entrenched at below those found nationally for some time, but analysis of attendance data from this year suggests that rates will be improved this year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also been significantly reduced, but leaders acknowledge there is still more work to be done in this area.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared to others nationally and in school continues to diminish so that it is eradicated in every year group
- the range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance and reduce the proportion who are persistently absent continues to be successful so that rates of attendance at least match or better those found nationally
- systems to track subject-specific skills in creative and foundation subjects are embedded so that pupils' progress can be analysed and any gaps in learning addressed.

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

Phil Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the phase leaders of each key stage, and the designated safeguarding leader. I also met with the school business manager and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. Alongside you, I visited lessons in each key stage and reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks in lessons. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school development plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised pupils' achievement in the 2016 and 2017 statutory assessments. I also reviewed the 85 responses to the school's own questionnaire for parents and carers as there were insufficient responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. I also scrutinised the school's website.