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Mrs Karen Todd
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Todd

Short inspection of Richard Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have provided well-focused leadership to drive the continual development of the school. Along with other leaders and governors, you have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The leadership team and governors share your ambition to improve pupils' outcomes and to deliver high-quality personal development and welfare for pupils. Your pupils told me that they enjoy the range of learning opportunities, including visits out of school, which your curriculum provides. Displays of the high-quality work produced across a range of subjects are evident in classrooms and across the school.

Leaders and staff have maintained the strengths in the school's provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, identified at the previous inspection. Positive relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils and their peers, make this a very inclusive, nurturing and caring school. Responsible roles for pupils in school, such as head boy and head girl, and being a member of the school council, help to develop pupils into responsible citizens. Pupils' behaviour and conduct throughout the inspection were exemplary; they displayed superb manners and were evidently proud to be members of your school. Parents are very positive about the care and welfare provided by staff, as well as the educational provision.

Leaders, staff and governors have worked successfully to largely address the areas in need of improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders regularly

review the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress and attainment improve. In 2017, pupils' progress by the end of Year 6 in mathematics and writing compared well to national averages. However, pupils' progress in reading was not as strong. Similarly, pupils' attainment in phonics by the end of Year 1 and attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 were below national averages. You and your staff have focused on improving your approaches to teaching reading. Your current pupil progress information indicates that this is having a positive effect across the school. There is still some work to be done to embed these approaches in teaching reading and phonics, and to improve further the proportion of pupils working at the higher standard in reading by the end of Year 6.

The second area for improvement was to ensure that senior leaders rigorously check the progress of all pupils more regularly. Senior leaders use a range of approaches to check for improvement. For example, your subject leader for English has checked carefully for improvements in the quality of teaching of reading and the effect on pupils' outcomes through a range of approaches. The key stage 1 leader has also checked both the teaching of phonics and reading in her phase of the school. However, neither of these leaders has reviewed the teaching of these areas in early years. This means that they do not have a first-hand understanding of how phonics and reading are developing in early years.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a positive safeguarding culture at your school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out appropriate checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. However, leaders, including governors, have not always ensured that recruitment processes have followed best practice. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so that they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You and your staff work effectively with parents, carers and other agencies. Your documentation demonstrates that leaders and staff take timely action where there are any concerns about safeguarding children.

Your pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take and are confident that staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils believe that behaviour is very good and that incidents of bullying are rare. Staff supervise playtimes suitably and there is a wide range of activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils were keen to tell me about the playground squad, who are pupils who help their peers to enjoy a successful playtime. Parents, staff and pupils agree that the school is a safe place to be.

Inspection findings

- You, leaders and staff are taking effective action to improve pupils' progress in reading. Leaders have implemented a range of initiatives, both to improve pupils' love of literature and to improve pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. Our

visits to English lessons demonstrated how staff are responding well to recent training to improve their approaches to the teaching of reading. The use of a sequence of teacher modelling, pupil paired work and independent working is engaging pupils well and developing their comprehension skills. A detailed focus on improving pupils' vocabulary is helping pupils to gain greater understanding of the text. You have invested in improving your book stock generally. However, some of the resources we noted on our visits to lessons were less inspiring.

- Teachers are considering how to ensure that there is sufficient challenge in reading lessons in order to raise the proportions of pupils who are working at the higher standard or greater depth. While we noted some evidence of this during our visits to classrooms, sometimes it was not until the final stages of lessons that pupils encountered the more demanding activities. Consequently, on occasions, the most able pupils are spending too much time working on more simple work before working on activities to provide them with challenge.
- Your approaches to recording key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are detailed and purposeful. You and the leaders use these effectively to identify pupils' starting points and the progress they make over time. Your information for current pupils indicates that, overall, these pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Although there is an improving picture for pupils' reading attainment, there is still further work to be done to increase the proportions of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are achieving the higher standard and greater depth.
- The early years leader has rightly focused on improving children's communication skills and their outcomes in early phonics and reading. During our visits to Nursery and Reception classes, we observed a variety of reading and phonics activities that were well matched to children's needs and had a high level of adult support. However, we noted some variability in how well staff make use of assessment in sessions and resources to support children's learning. As a result, sometimes staff do not spot children's errors, opportunities to intervene promptly to improve learning are missed and children find it difficult to respond to staff expectations for quality work using the resources provided. There is further work to do to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching of reading and phonics in early years.
- Your evaluation of children's starting points on entry to Nursery, as 'typically well below' is overly cautious. While children starting early years do represent a wide range of abilities and some have limited English when they start school, the recent starters to Nursery that we observed were not well below the development expected for their age. Other groups of children in Nursery engaged well with learning activities, both when working with adults and when choosing activities independently. You agreed that it would be useful to review the accuracy of assessment when children start in Nursery.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception has been substantially below that found nationally. Recent improvements to the quality of early years teaching, for example in reading and early phonics, are beginning to improve your children's progress in these areas. Your assessments of Reception children's attainment

indicate that there will be a further improvement in their achievement compared to previous years. However, you recognise that there is more to be done to increase further the proportions of children who are achieving a good level of development and you have plans in place to address this.

- Governors have a good understanding of the community the school serves and the school's priorities. Visits into school alongside the school improvement partner are helping them to check the effect of strategic decisions by visiting classrooms and talking to pupils. Training to develop governors' understanding of the school's progress information compared to national outcomes is helping them to compare pupils' progress with that found nationally. Detailed reporting from leaders, including analysis of current pupils' progress information, ensures that governors are well informed about the school's development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the actions to improve the quality of teaching of reading and phonics are embedded, so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, make at least good progress and that pupils' attainment at both the expected and higher standards matches the national averages
- the school's assessments of children's attainment on entry are reviewed and the actions taken to improve children's outcomes in early years are developed further so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at least matches the national average
- leaders, including governors, follow best practice during staff recruitment processes.

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

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and leaders for English, early years and key stage 1. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I met with a representative from the local authority and your school improvement partner. My discussions with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with additional information. I took into account school documentation, assessment information,

policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 29 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, the 34 responses to the staff survey and the 112 responses to the pupil survey. I met with two parents, at the end of the school day, who requested to share their views about the school. Along with you, I visited six classes to observe teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read, both within lessons and individually. I looked at pupils' English work in lessons to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered information relating to safeguarding.