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25 September 2018

Mrs Patricia Petrie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Petrie

Short inspection of Bankfields Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Since taking up post, you have, with determination and energy, set about introducing well-considered steps to improve outcomes for pupils. You have developed effective monitoring and evaluation systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning and on how well pupils make progress. With your senior and middle leaders, you carefully use the information you gather to make necessary changes to the curriculum and develop staff skills. As a result, you know in detail the strengths of the school and those areas you wish to develop further.

Your plans show that you have used your analysis of the school's performance to identify priorities for the next steps of development. For example, you are improving reading in key stage 1 and further accelerating the progress made by pupils in a wider range of subjects. Your governing body has a detailed understanding of the school's performance. Through their well-focused challenge and support, they have helped you to improve the school effectively.

Your constant focus on pupils' well-being and achievement in a safe environment is at the centre of your work with pupils, staff and families. It enables pupils to thrive. Staff feel valued and appreciate the support and challenge you provide them. As a consequence, they are committed to doing their very best for the children they work with. The professional confidence you instil in them enables them to continually refine their work to support pupils' achievement and promote their personal development.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are proud of their learning and know that staff will always help them if they have a problem. With very few exceptions, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers say that they hold the school in high esteem. They mirror their children's views that pupils are kept safe, are happy and learn well. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved consistently over time and continues to do so. You have introduced a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Well-targeted support for learning ensures that a very high proportion of children meet the requirements of the phonics screening check. Children in the early years make strong progress from starting points that are often below those typical for their age, particularly in the areas of communication and language and personal and social development.

You ensure that the curriculum, alongside extra-curricular clubs, provides pupils with a wide range of experiences that enrich their learning. Through trips and visits, pupils enhance their experience of the world around them. They learn to apply their learning and enhance their understanding to cement their classroom learning. For example, pupils visited York recently to put their learning about the plague into context. Similarly, pupils enhance their social skills and self-confidence through residential visits to an outdoor activity centre.

You have worked recently with staff to renew the school's programmes for learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. This has brought greater clarity to what is expected of pupils and how well pupils can show and explain what they learn. Pupils make strong progress across a wide range of subjects. Nevertheless, their progress does not yet quite match the very strong, and sometimes exceptional, progress made by pupils in English and mathematics. You have set a clear focus for middle leaders and staff this year to develop pupils' learning further across the range of foundation subjects.

Through your well-considered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills. They become self-confident learners who are able to solve problems. They find ways to move forward when they are 'stuck' by using resources, working with others or through discussion with teachers. They learn to reflect on their learning and how they can keep improving it. Their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Pupils' well-developed learning skills contribute effectively to the progress they make. Pupils grow in self-confidence. They show consideration for others during lessons and around school. They are caring and respectful of others who come from different backgrounds from their own. Together with the wider curriculum, the

PSHE programme prepares pupils exceptionally well for their next steps in education.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors ensure that school leaders make all the required checks on staff. Leaders conscientiously record them to make sure that only suitable adults work with pupils. Staff receive regular training and updated information about risks to pupils' well-being. Staff use their training and knowledge of pupils in their care to keep a watchful eye out for any signs of neglect or abuse. They know what to do if they have a concern. Staff understand that small pieces of information can inform a bigger picture and are important to record. Safeguarding leaders carefully use information in their work with families and other agencies to ensure that early help is provided when necessary.

As part of your work in redesigning the curriculum, you have ensured that there is a firm focus on developing pupils' understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils show good levels of understanding of the possible risks to their well-being when they use the internet and other digital technologies. They understand the steps they should take to keep their identities secure. They know that they should tell a member of staff or a parent if they have a worry about something they have come across when using the internet. Alongside the wider work of the school to help pupils understand how to keep well physically and emotionally, these steps help keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- I considered, with you, how well the school is improving achievement in the early years and how well the teaching of phonics supports children's wider learning. Careful, accurate checks on children's development enable staff to plan activities for children that best help them develop and learn. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved over time and has been sustained in line with the national average. Staff are skilled in using questions and suggestions to enable children to explore their ideas and express themselves with increasing skill.
- You have introduced a school-wide approach to teaching phonics, which supports staff well in tailoring their teaching to children's needs. As a result, children acquire the skills they need to develop effective early reading and writing skills that support their access to wider areas of learning. A very high proportion of pupils meet the requirements of the phonics screening check.
- Your consistent focus on the quality of teaching and developing the skills of staff has paid dividends. The rapid improvement in the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as in spelling, grammar and punctuation, has been sustained over the last three years. You have successfully refined your focus of work with staff on increasing the proportions of pupils achieving greater depth at key stage 1 and the higher standard at key stage 2.

Pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics. They demonstrate high levels of fluency and problem-solving skills.

- While there is a gap in the progress of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the school, disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress than others nationally. At key stage 2, you have increased the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieve at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined by over 10% in summer 2018. Work in pupils' books confirms that high levels of achievement are being sustained. Despite the improvements so far, your evaluation of pupils' slightly weaker progress in reading, particularly in Year 1, is accurate. You have made this a clear focus of the school's work – to bring reading in this year group up to the same very high standards as other areas of learning.
- You are firm in your belief that good attendance and high-quality teaching and learning across a lively and engaging curriculum are key to the future success and well-being of your pupils. With your governors and staff, you have set about making the school a safe, exciting and engaging place to be. The work of the attendance officer and school counsellor provides the additional support to pupils and families that promotes good attendance. The very positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin pupils' enjoyment in coming to school.
- Despite significant absence due to illness last year, attendance rates were in line with the national average. You take a firm stance against parents taking their children on holidays during term time. Well-timed events, such as the residential trip to an outdoor activity centre in the early part of the autumn term, further encourage good attendance. The concerted efforts of the whole school community have led to a large and sustained reduction in the rate of persistent absence.
- As you have secured significant improvements in pupils' attendance and achievement in the core subjects, you have extended your focus of attention to the wider range of subject areas. You have worked with staff to develop the school's expectations of learning across the curriculum. Teachers readily respond to the opportunities to develop subject specialisms and to lead their peers to teach effectively. They relish the opportunities to work with each other and fellow professionals from partner schools.
- Staff have a strong understanding of how to build progression in learning from term to term and year to year. While books do not consistently show the same accelerated progress as in core subjects, staff training and development are securing and extending pupils' progress. You have put in place plans to refine further how you develop and assess subject-specific skills to improve pupils' progress to the same levels as core subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and assessment are used more effectively to improve the progress pupils make in reading, particularly in Year 1
- the work to sharpen the focus of teaching and learning of subject-specific skills in the wider curriculum leads to the same high levels of progress as in core subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Campbell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior and middle leaders. I also talked with pupils informally and in a group. I listened to a small sample of pupils read during visits to lessons. I talked with a number of parents and other adults bringing pupils to school in the morning. I held meetings with the governing body and representative local authority. I gathered evidence by visiting lessons in each year group and you accompanied me on most of these. I also considered the work in pupils' books, including work completed in the previous school year, as you offered to make those books available where possible. I considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I took into account staff responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. A wide range of documents were evaluated, including those relating to the school's safeguarding arrangements, the school's self-evaluation and the plans for future development. I considered the school's records of pupils' progress and information about their attendance.