

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 November 2018

Miss Sarah Barningham
Headteacher
Bullion Lane Primary School
Bullion Lane
Chester le Street
County Durham
DH2 2DP

Dear Miss Barningham

Short inspection of Bullion Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have successfully created a place where pupils take pride in their learning, thrive and learn how to keep themselves and others safe. The school is vibrant and happy, where many pupils who need to catch up do so, and those that are vulnerable begin to excel. The determined, resilient and passionate leadership that you, your deputy and governors provide has ensured that the school continues to improve. Aspects identified in the previous inspection have been largely addressed; teaching and learning have improved and are now a consistent strength across all classrooms.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, begin to catch up quickly in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, most pupils achieve the expected standards for their age and some exceed these standards. Disadvantaged pupils do consistently well and achieve as well as other pupils nationally, in both the key stage 1 and key stage 2 national assessments of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements; they are very well prepared for their next steps in education. Pupils work with purpose and have positive attitudes to their lessons. They take pride and care in their work, their writing is neat and mathematics work is laid out with accuracy, no matter which subject is being taught. Opportunities to deepen children's understanding and thinking, especially for the most able, are sometimes missed.

Parents and carers who made their views known say that staff are approachable and readily available to listen to their concerns. The vast majority of parents are highly appreciative of you and your team's work and some said that they are 'blown away' by the lengths your staff will go to support children who have SEN and/or disabilities. They see no serious concerns about behaviour and bullying and say their children are happy and safe in school.

You have built on the school's strengths and have established a culture of continuous reflection and improvement. Your plan to improve the school is based on a detailed analysis of the information about pupils' performance and governors' evaluation of the findings of your monitoring. You have successfully identified the needs and taken effective action to improve the outcomes in early years and in addition, ensured that the provision for disadvantaged pupils results in strong outcomes. Governors are fully engaged in strategic evaluation and shaping the school's priorities. Consequently, everyone has clarity about the strengths of the school. However, some pupils who have previously been high attainers have not been factored into your analysis of pupils' outcomes sufficiently, to ensure that all groups of pupils make the progress they can.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. You, skilfully supported by your deputy headteacher and governors, ensure that a culture of safeguarding is evident and informs many aspects of the life of the school. Safeguarding is kept at the forefront of people's minds through training and updates that make sure staff have a secure understanding of how children are kept safe and risks can be identified. Detailed, high-quality records ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The curriculum is alive to emerging issues, including what life is like for pupils beyond the school gate. I talked to pupils who spoke passionately and knowledgeably about their 'hate crime day', which was taking place during my visit. Additional measures, including lessons and assemblies, inform the personal, social and health education programme and have an emphasis on ensuring pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations, including when online. In addition, pupils and staff have supportive and strong relationships, which helps pupils feel safe and consequently, they have faith in the adults who look after them.

Senior leaders, including governors, have regular checks and systems to ensure that the suitability and the processes of appointing staff are secure. The responsible governor meets with your deputy on a regular basis to ensure that all procedures are secure and she has a good working knowledge of how safeguarding is working in the school.

Inspection findings

- Children start the school with a range of abilities, skills and attitudes, with many having substantial barriers to achieving well. It is a strength of the school that those who need to catch up make rapid progress and many go on to achieve expected outcomes from low starting points. In addition, most pupils make accelerated progress across most year groups and key stages, including in early years. As a result, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, they have achieved outcomes consistently above those seen nationally for the past three years, in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who work beyond the expectations for their age is similar to that seen nationally. Evidence seen during my visit shows that this profile has been maintained by the recent Year 6 cohort. Consequently, pupils are well prepared to thrive in their next stages of education. Additional funding makes sure that these strong outcomes are reflected in the achievements of vulnerable groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Progress for the most able pupils is not as strong as that seen for other groups of pupils and sometimes dips below that of similar pupils seen nationally.
- The school ensures a vibrant curriculum with many opportunities to apply and use learning in varied and real-world contexts. Staff work creatively to provide a wide range of extra-curricular and curriculum enhancement activities. A strong focus on basic skills in English and mathematics is then applied skilfully across other subjects in the curriculum. Teachers' planning ensures that all subjects are covered systematically, and regular checks by school leaders ensure that approaches are being applied consistently across all classes. Consequently, pupils are highly enthusiastic about most subjects and take care and pride in producing their work. In some foundation subjects, such as geography, pupils found it hard to remember what they had learned or covered. Additionally, in discussion, some pupils are less sure about applying their learning to a deeper level of understanding and this also apparent in their books.
- Governors have a detailed day-to-day knowledge of the life of the school and share the tenacity, vision and passion of the headteacher to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the children, whatever their background or starting point. Governors rigorously evaluate the work of school leaders and ensure that safeguarding is effective and that the use of additional funding for physical education and sport and for disadvantaged pupils is effective. The governors are highly skilled at challenging school leaders and have on their board experts in education and finance, among many other skills to support their work. They have a secure understanding of what is needed to improve the school further; however, the school's improvement planning sometimes lacks a sufficient focus on aspects that could help the school move to the next level.
- School leaders continue to work hard to try and ensure that pupils attend school more frequently. They provide support and challenge to the families of those children who are regularly absent and provide incentives and rewards for those who have good attendance. Additional actions have been taken to bolster this provision further. Pupils' attendance is improving, but still remains below that seen nationally. Fewer children are regularly absent and school leaders are

resolute in maintaining their actions to engage with families and resolve issues around attendance.

- Pupils are happy in and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and staff. Pupils talk confidently and maturely about bullying in all its forms including cyber bullying, racism and homophobia. Enthused by a curriculum that enables them to discuss hate crimes and current affairs that concern them, pupils have a developing understanding and sensitivity to personal and wider issues. Pupils share an understanding of the effect of using derogatory language, and are confident that any issues can be raised and will be dealt with quickly by all staff. As a consequence, pupils say that bullying rarely happens and they feel safe in school. In addition, they say that lessons are rarely, if ever, disrupted by other pupils. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and are usually engaged in their learning. Pupils are successfully expected to bring themselves in from the playground to lessons in an orderly fashion and settle quickly to their work.
- Teaching and learning are consistently strong across all classes and year groups. The lead practitioner role developed since the last inspection has had the effect of ensuring a high degree of consistency in approaches and expectations across classes. In lessons, teachers' personality, humour and enthusiasm are evident. They establish strong supportive relationships with pupils and provide carefully structured work to support learning. Teachers scaffold and model expectations of learning and use teaching assistants well to support a range of pupils. Next steps in learning are clear for most groups of pupils and activities provide a focus for the intended learning. Teachers work hard to engage and excite pupils to maintain and build on their interest. Consequently, pupils, especially those that need to catch up, work hard and achieve well. However, evidence of work seen in pupils' books and through discussions with pupils, confirms that the challenge for the most able pupils to think hard and apply what they already know is not consistently applied. In early years, adults provide a stimulating and exciting learning environment. They are skilled at asking questions to help children develop their ideas, but the focus on developing communication, speaking and listening skills accurately is not always evident.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a sharper focus is given in school improvement priorities to the progress the most able pupils can be expected to make
- they continue to develop the foundation subjects, so that pupils can remember more of what they have covered and have more opportunities to apply and deepen their understanding and thinking.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders and a local authority adviser. I observed learning in all classrooms. A joint observation was carried out with the headteacher and lead practitioner. I listened to some pupils read, looked at pupils' work and held discussions with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at playtimes and in lessons. I also looked at the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, and talked with some parents at the beginning of the school day. I also looked at a wide range of documentation, including information about the performance of teachers and pupils, the school's own self-evaluation, and information on the curriculum, safeguarding and other policies. I also checked the school's website to ensure that it has the information that parents should have access to.