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8 November 2018

Mr Richard Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Clarke

Short inspection of Bythams Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the staff team, and governors have worked hard to create a stimulating environment where pupils are motivated to learn. Relationships between pupils and adults are extremely positive. Pupils feel that this is a happy, caring school.

Pupils enjoy their learning and spoke with enthusiasm about the exciting visits and learning activities that the school provides. They like the wide range of after-school clubs as well as the visits and experiences that the school provides. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and respectful and cooperate well with each other. Pupils follow staff instructions quickly and respond well to the school's reward systems to promote good behaviour. They are keen to do well and are proud of their school. One pupil commented that: 'This is a small school with a big heart.'

Parents value the school's caring ethos and feel that the teachers know their children well. They appreciate the support that they and their children receive. Their responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive. They valued the fact that you were an approachable presence at the start of each school day to deal with any concerns they may have.

The governing body knows the school well and provides you with appropriate challenge and support. Governors have a clear vision for the school and know what

needs to be done to further develop the quality of education. They check the work of the school regularly through visits to classrooms to observe learning, through work scrutiny and through consultation with pupils and parents. This ensures that they have a good overview of the school. Governors demonstrate a strong commitment to helping the school to improve further.

The previous inspection report highlighted the need to develop handwriting skills and ensure that good handwriting was used consistently across all subject areas. Leaders have successfully addressed this area for improvement. Pupils' work in their books shows that handwriting is now taught effectively with pupils using a joined style. Pupils take care with their handwriting and presentation. They have pride in their work. Displays of pupils' writing around the school further encourage high standards.

Leaders were also challenged to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. They have partially achieved this. Results in the early years show that the percentage of children achieving a good level of development in mathematics was above that achieved nationally in 2017. This progress has been built on in key stage 1 with strong results in 2016 and 2017. Progress in key stage 2 has not been as consistent and, overall, pupils have achieved less well in mathematics than in reading and writing. Leaders have recognised this and have implemented a range of strategies to raise progress in mathematics across the school. These have had an impact on the progress of high-ability Year 6 pupils whose attainment was above that achieved nationally this year. However, there is more to do to ensure that all pupils make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that pupils are safe in school. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. They are vigilant and recognise the need to monitor and record low-level concerns. They discuss these with you regularly and this enables the school to offer early support for families when it is needed. Safeguarding issues are followed up diligently and detailed chronologies are kept by the school to ensure that children are supported well. Safeguarding records are stored securely. You ensure that all staff and volunteers are rigorously checked before they start work or volunteer at the school.

Pupils told me that bullying is extremely rare and that their concerns are dealt with promptly. They report that staff will 'always listen' to them. They are taught about e-safety and know how to stay safe online. The school has high rates of attendance which are above those nationally and has robust procedures in place to address poor attendance. Pupils value their education and attend regularly.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have recognised the need to improve progress and attainment in mathematics and you have put in place a range of strategies and resources to address this. Key stage 2 results indicate that these have had an impact on the attainment of high-ability pupils but have not been as successful in raising the

attainment of middle-ability pupils. Leaders are addressing this underachievement in a more robust manner this year. Leaders have provided additional teaching hours this academic year so that pupils in Years 4 to 6 can be taught separately for mathematics and for grammar, punctuation and spelling. The work scrutiny that we carried out together during the inspection shows that mathematics is being taught more effectively and that there are appropriate challenges for the most able pupils. However, we found that these are not yet used consistently across all year groups.

- The mathematics leader has attended specialist training in mathematics mastery and has worked with teachers to improve their confidence and delivery of this approach. However, she has not had the opportunity to observe teachers to enable her to fully evaluate the impact of these strategies and address areas of weakness in teaching and learning.
- You have accurately identified areas for improvement in teaching and learning and have implemented strategies to address these. The impact of these has been affected by staff changes since the last inspection. The literacy leaders have had access to appropriate professional development and strong links with other schools. This helps them to share and develop good practice, but they are relatively new to their roles. Consequently, their ability to evaluate the impact of current strategies is limited. They need to develop greater rigour in their approach to their roles and be clear about both the intended and actual impact of new strategies on pupil progress.
- Pupils' attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar has been below that achieved nationally for the past two years, even although writing attainment and progress has consistently been strong. You have introduced specific curriculum time to ensure that grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught well. The work scrutiny that we carried out together indicates that these skills are now being taught with precision and rigour. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 were observed using colons accurately in writing a play script linked to their topic of pirates. They were confident in using the school's self-assessment procedures. We also observed that opportunities for cross-curricular writing were not being fully developed in some year groups.
- Progress and attainment in reading in the last two years across all key stages has been strong. Attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 declined in 2018 and is below that achieved in previous years. Although the small classes have led to fluctuations of attainment, leaders have acted swiftly to ensure that pupils make strong progress. They have purchased additional resources to strengthen the teaching of phonics and to develop comprehension skills. The school has a strong reading reward scheme to encourage pupils to read and to foster a love of reading. Year 6 pupils have written to authors to request reading books for additional rewards for the scheme. Pupils say that they read regularly in school and at home. They report that the reading reward scheme 'motivates us to read'. They enjoy reading and are keen to share the plots of the books they have chosen.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop the roles and accountability of subject leaders to ensure that they take greater responsibility for leading improvement in subject areas
- leaders at all levels evaluate more closely the impact of new initiatives to ensure that all pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the leaders with responsibility for mathematics and literacy. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I met with four governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke on the telephone with an educational adviser from the local authority. I visited all of the classrooms with you and we looked at pupils' work together. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and formally during a group discussion. I also observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour, a summary of the school's self-evaluation and the school's improvement plan. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 35 responses to Ofsted's free-text service for parents. I also considered the eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 45 responses to the pupil survey.