

22 May 2019

Mrs Michelle Binns  
Headteacher  
Ward Green Primary School  
Vernon Road  
Worsbrough Bridge  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S70 5HJ

Dear Mrs Binns

### **Short inspection of Ward Green Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2019, 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 November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that inspection, you have made many changes and during the last two years, with support from the Hoyland Common Academy Trust, rapid improvement has taken place. You provide dedicated and astute leadership and demonstrate a passion to provide the best for every child. In your accurate and detailed self-evaluation summary, you correctly describe the school as 'good and improving'. With the support of recently appointed senior leaders, a positive culture for learning has been established. The environment is attractive and stimulating; displays in the corridors and classrooms are vibrant and teaching walls provide practical support and examples of good practice. Recently appointed teachers are afforded good support from senior and middle leaders. Staff morale is high and teachers work closely as a team to share good practice. Many parents and carers praised the good work of the school and, particularly, the professionalism of the teaching staff and teaching assistants. One parent commented: 'I couldn't recommend it enough. My child has been made to feel really welcome and I have seen a massive difference in her learning.' Another specifically praised the special educational needs support that has been provided for her child. Some parents raised the issue of staff absence in one year group and this is something you are working hard to resolve. Pupils are proud of their school and spoke enthusiastically of the many good things that it offers. All said that they enjoy coming to school and would definitely recommend it to a friend.

Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school. In the early years, children get off to a wonderful start and outcomes have improved in recent years. The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is

in line with the national average. In 2018, the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national figures. Leaders are now working to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards by the end of Year 2 and, although this work is starting to pay off, this is still an area for further improvement.

Your relentless pursuit to develop the school further and provide the best for the pupils has meant that areas for improvement, which were recommended in your last inspection report, have been addressed thoroughly. Much work has been undertaken to raise achievement in mathematics. Staff training, improving pupils' mental skills, establishing home-school links, improving learning strategies and classroom working walls have all had a positive effect. Mathematics is now an area of strength. In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average. During my visit, I observed mathematics lessons in three year groups. Pupils demonstrated strong subject knowledge and were confident in their use of calculation strategies. Since the last inspection, relationships between home and school have been strengthened. Parents are kept well informed about the progress that their child is making through regular parents' meetings. Staff have also established online platforms where parents can access examples of their child's achievements in school. This is proving to be effective, particularly for children in the early years.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

As designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all records are of high quality and meticulously kept. Together with the school business manager, you ensure that all checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. Teachers and governors attend regular child protection training.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They say that there is rarely any bullying. They feel very safe and well cared for in school. Behaviour logs show that leaders and teachers respond appropriately to any rare incidents of bullying. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe when they are using the internet. They were able to describe to me exactly what I need to do to stay safe online. They also described the work of the 'Junior Wardens', a group of pupils who work with the emergency services and provide advice about safety to their peers.

Pupils' attendance is monitored assiduously by you and your office staff. Consequently, the attendance rates of pupils for the past three years have been either above or in line with national averages.

Governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fully compliant and they have completed various training activities, including safer recruitment training.

Pupils at risk, or subject to child protection plans, are well supported. One parent was keen to describe the excellent support that she had been afforded and described how teachers and assistants had provided an 'environment of stability and safety' for her child. These views were reflected in Parent View, Ofsted's online

questionnaire, where almost all of those who responded felt that their child was safe at school.

## **Inspection findings**

- For my first line of enquiry, I wanted to find out how you and your leadership team have established strong and effective home-school links. This was because the previous inspection report required you to improve communication with parents. Many parents were keen to tell me how approachable the staff are and how any concerns are quickly addressed. You have supported parents with social and mental health issues and have worked closely with external agencies to ensure that families are well supported. Workshops for parents have been established so that they can support their children. Recent workshops have focused on phonics, mathematics, SATs preparation and internet safety. Formal parents' evenings are held termly and, as well as a verbal progress report, parents are given a booklet detailing the next steps to be taken to help their child.
- My second line of enquiry focused on pupils' achievement and progress in reading. This is because, in the last two years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and the higher standard in this subject has been below average. The English leaders are aware of this issue and have introduced a number of strategies to improve achievement. New class texts have been purchased and already these are broadening reading skills. An increased emphasis on developing pupils' comprehension skills and, in particular, questions involving inference, has also been a focus. Moderation of pupils' work and monitoring of teaching are raising standards. School assessment information and inspection evidence indicate that the proportion of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils reaching the higher standard in reading is set to increase in 2019. Even so, further work is needed to strengthen the culture of reading across the school.
- Another line of enquiry focused on the provision for early years children. The appointment of a new early years leader, who possesses great vision, has brought about significant change. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen steadily over the past three years and is now in line with the national average. However, the gender gap between boys' and girls' attainment has widened over this period. The early years leader is addressing this issue through topics that follow the children's interests. From the outset, boys are being targeted with opportunities to develop communication and language skills. Areas of provision, such as the 'construction site', have enabled boys to develop moving and handling skills. There has also been a focus on increasing challenge for the most able, who are now quickly identified, set aspirational targets and receive additional support with individually tailored learning programmes. Greater parental involvement, both in school and through the school's online communication platform, has supported learning for all pupil groups.
- I was interested to find out more about writing and this was another line of enquiry. This was because over the past three years, attainment in writing in key stage 2 has improved dramatically. The progress that pupils make in writing is

equally impressive. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils' progress was in the top 10% of pupils nationally in writing. Across the school, a strong writing culture has been established. Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to write with a purpose – one example being pupils writing to the lord mayor to highlight public transport issues in Barnsley. It is clear that pupils enjoy their writing tasks and, because of this, achieve good results. In key stage 1 and Reception, the proportion reaching the expected standard in writing has improved and is now in line with the national average. However, few pupils reach the higher standard because there has been a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders have correctly identified the teaching of writing to the most able pupils as an area that needs improvement.

- While carrying out a scrutiny of the written work from several year groups, I noticed that, although the content of the work is of a high standard, the presentation is, at times, untidy. You have identified this and intend to implement a new handwriting programme throughout the school.
- The academy trust and the governing body have a comprehensive knowledge of the school and provide good support. They make regular visits and are knowledgeable about safeguarding and attainment data. Governors were able to describe accurately to me the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in the management of the school and provide strong support and challenge in equal measure.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reading skills continue to be developed across the school so that more pupils in both key stages achieve or exceed the standard expected for their age and make greater progress
- a universal handwriting scheme is developed to ensure a consistent approach to the presentation of written work
- there is a greater level of challenge for the most able pupils, so that a higher proportion reach the higher standards.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Knowles  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the assistant headteacher, the leaders for English, the early years leader, the school business manager, the chief executive officer of the Hoyland Common Academy Trust and three members of the governing body. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data, safeguarding logs and the recent external review. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 40 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I met formally with three groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second and third groups talked about reading and I listened to them all read. I also spoke with pupils informally in lessons and around school. You and I observed a range of learning across all classes, including number work and phonics in key stage 1 and reading/writing and mathematics in key stage 2. We also visited the early years to gauge the quality of indoor and outdoor provision. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of the written work in English, science and topic work from several year groups and looked at writing portfolios. I also analysed the responses from Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.