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Mrs Sarah Hayes
Headteacher
Stocksfield Avenue Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hayes

Short inspection of Stocksfield Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 your predecessor 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. Your high expectations, commitment and vision are evident throughout the school. Leaders are dedicated, focused and highly effective. They provide strong and inspirational leadership. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Morale is high, and the vast majority of parents have the upmost confidence in the school's work. The relationships between staff and pupils are superb. Consequently, there is a tangible team spirit and a sense of community across the school. This enables staff to provide highly effective levels of care, guidance and support.

Stocksfield Avenue is a happy, caring and inclusive school. Leaders have created an open and welcoming culture. Pupils are engaged in, and excited by, their learning. You have created and developed a strong team of leaders who share your passion for the school and your commitment to ensure the continued success of every pupil. Parents highly value how well staff get to know their children as individuals. The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the school. One parent said, 'It is a fantastic school, that pushes the children to achieve their very best.' Another parent summed up the views of many, saying, 'Stocksfield is a brilliant school. The teachers are amazing, and my children are very happy here.'

Leaders, including governors, have an unrelenting drive to raise standards. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders gather

and evaluate a wide range of information to ensure that they can focus on the core priorities and address any issues.

Leaders have maintained the strengths highlighted in the previous inspection report and addressed the areas to improve, such as writing. Leaders have thoroughly reviewed the school's approach to writing. You have introduced a consistent and highly effective approach to the teaching of this essential skill. The strong emphasis on writing across subjects has helped to improve the regularity as well as the range of high-quality writing. Pupils routinely edit and improve their work. As a result of these changes, pupils' writing has improved considerably, and pupils invariably make strong progress in writing. Above all, pupils enjoy writing.

Teaching is effective and is continuing to improve. Teachers inspire pupils to learn and encourage them to achieve. Pupils want to show what they can do and are eager to talk about their learning. They present their work neatly and with evident pride. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and demonstrate exemplary behaviour in and out of lessons. Staff have high expectations of all pupils, ensuring that learning takes place in a calm, purposeful and productive atmosphere.

Governors have a clear, detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and appropriate areas for further development. They challenge and support the senior leadership team effectively. Governors carry out a range of useful tasks to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness, including checking safeguarding arrangements. Governors are fully supportive of the school. They know the school well and are ambitious for its continued success. The acting chief executive officer and board of trustees share governors' commitment to the school. Collectively, they bring a wide range of skills and experiences, providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge to school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are assiduous and thorough in acting to keep pupils safe. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and fit for purpose. You have made sure that staff are acutely aware of the school's procedures and your expectations for the care of your pupils. As designated safeguarding leader and supported by the family workers, you have developed a clear, effective and well-established culture of safeguarding within the school. Your dedicated team of staff know how to identify concerns and how to report them in a timely manner. They work effectively together and with external agencies, when appropriate, to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Records of concerns and the actions taken are carefully noted and responded to as appropriate. The recruitment and induction of new staff are carried out effectively. Training and updates are timely and are responsive to the changing needs of the pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school and have great confidence in the adults who look after them. They are taught how to keep themselves safe through a range of lessons and other activities. Leaders ensure that learning about how to stay safe is an integral part of the pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils and staff speak

positively about the learning that takes place around diversity, determination, mental well-being and resilience. Younger children speak about being a 'stickasaurus' when explaining how they did not give up when learning. Whereas, older pupils speak with confidence about learning how to stay safe when using the internet or social media. Pupils are aware that bullying can take place, but they state that this 'never really happens'. Moreover, they are confident that if it does occur teachers will deal with it quickly and effectively, or as they put it 'will help people to be friends again'. Providing access to a counsellor or family support worker, as appropriate, is further evidence of leaders' commitment to pupils' well-being.

Inspection findings

- Children at Stocksfield Avenue get off to an excellent start in Reception because the early years leader, rightly, has high expectations for the children in her care. There was a very lively atmosphere and an air of excitement and purposeful activity when we visited the Reception class. Children were observed developing their early literacy and numeracy skills well, cooperating with each other, and using their problem-solving and reasoning skills to explore and investigate. It was clear that children experience a wide range of highly engaging activities, which skilfully build on their interests, strengths and what they need to do to make even greater progress. This is clearly reflected in the focused photographic and written records of children's work. Everywhere I looked, children were absorbed in learning and the area buzzed with their excitement. It is not surprising, therefore, that children make strong progress in the Reception class and they are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.
- Your Nursery class was also a hive of purposeful play and activity. Our visit to the Nursery confirmed leaders' views that routines for effective learning in numeracy and writing are being established. The environment was well planned and effectively used to support learning. Above all, children are safe and happy. They learn effectively through play and make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is also a clear strength of the school. The phonics sessions that we visited were engaging and supported pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make. The teaching of phonics and reading in Reception and Year 1 is highly effective. Children participate actively in phonics sessions, which are carefully planned to match their needs. Work in pupils' writing books shows that they have opportunities to apply the phonic skills they learn in these sessions. Consequently, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last three years.
- The teaching of reading is a growing strength across the school. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving at the higher standard was above average. Pupils and younger children demonstrate a love of reading and were able to talk about their favourite books and why they enjoy reading. Those who read to me did so with fluency and expression. However, older pupils struggled to work out the meaning of

unfamiliar words and phrases such as 'eccentricities', 'empire-building' and 'at a stretch', in a complex text. But, they were determined to 'have a go' and were unphased by the challenge. Leaders are rightly confident in the new initiatives that they have introduced to improve the teaching of reading. Consequently, pupils' progress is improving and, above all, they enjoy reading. However, leaders recognise that in order to make stronger progress in key stage 2, continued action is needed to improve pupils' vocabulary and skills in drawing inference from complex texts.

- Leaders have developed a curriculum which inspires, motivates and challenges pupils to learn. The range of opportunities and varied experiences enable pupils across the school to deepen their knowledge, broaden their skills and prepare them for the next stage in their education. The well-developed curriculum is structured to provide a purposeful approach that builds on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in different subjects. A current focus has been to broaden pupils' vocabulary.
- You have rightly placed a strong focus on strengthening the teaching of mathematics across the school. The introduction of your '5 a day' mathematics sessions has placed a focus on ensuring fluency and addressing misconceptions. Arithmetic is taught effectively, and pupils are given many opportunities to practise their arithmetical skills. Work in pupils' books shows that across the school pupils are making good progress. Pupils speak positively about their learning in mathematics and, as with other subjects, take pride in their work. However, in 2018 the proportion achieving the expected standard and higher standard in mathematics by the end of Year 6 was below the national average. Work in current pupils' books demonstrates that the changes you have introduced are already having a positive effect on current pupils' progress and attainment. However, the opportunities that are given to pupils to use reasoning and problem-solving skills are not as well developed. Recent work to include more reasoning opportunities in lessons is not yet consistent and is not yet fully embedded.
- Leaders are resolute in their determination to improve attendance and to emphasise the importance of good attendance. Individual attendance is checked regularly, and parents are informed of any issues. Your tenacious approach has ensured that attendance improves each year and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has fallen to below the national average. Good relationships with families and highly effective family workers have helped to ensure that improvements in attendance have been made quickly. Most importantly, pupils enjoy coming to school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to broaden pupils' vocabulary and skills in drawing inference from texts, so that their reading comprehension continues to improve
- more-consistent opportunities are given to pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with the acting chief executive officer and the chair of the Smart Schools Trust. I also met with your early years leader, and your leaders of English and mathematics. Together, you and I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also looked in depth at pupils' writing and mathematics books and other work. I met with a group of pupils. I listened to six pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. I took into account 21 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 33 questionnaire responses from staff and the one response to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I also evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. I met with you as designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe. I also met with the school's family workers.