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Miss Tammy Cooper
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Dear Miss Cooper

Short inspection of South Bank Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite many considerable changes and challenges since the previous inspection, pupils have continued to make good progress. In 2017 and 2018 for example, the rate of pupils' progress through key stage 2 was well above the national average in reading, writing and in mathematics. Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that Southbank Community Primary School serves its local community and families well.

As a newly appointed headteacher, you have a dogged determination to make sure that pupils' learning and well-being are at the centre of the school's work. To this end, you have looked closely at the leadership, quality of teaching and, along with governors, have made some decisive changes to staffing and structure. Although it is still early days, the impact on improving pupils' progress from their starting points continues.

You and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. You have been reflective and forward thinking, and have improved the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils benefit from an exciting curriculum which provides them with memorable experiences. The after-school clubs are a particular highlight of the week and pupils enjoy a wide range of curriculum experiences, such as art and crafts, sport, 'Rubies' girls clubs, dance and cooking.

Parents and carers are delighted with all that the school offers. Parental responses

to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive. They value your warm and purposeful leadership. Parents know that you always have the best interests of their children at heart. One parent, speaking for many, told me that, 'This is a school that sets children up for life,' and that 'Teachers educate us in how to help our children.'

The school is a happy learning community where all groups of pupils thrive because they know that teachers will help them to succeed. As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are impressive. Pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with respect and care. Pupils recognise that the 'High Five' of honesty, being helpful and caring, looking after property, listen and work hard, and keep ourselves safe are at the centre of the school. They told me that these values are shared by all pupils. Pupils behave very well in class and around the school, including during breaktimes and lunchtime. Pupils enjoy talking about their work and their achievements. You have established a positive climate for learning, and a nurturing ethos throughout the school that is supported by strong relationships between staff, pupils and parents.

Pupils are proud of their school and they are eager to learn. They talk enthusiastically about their enjoyment of lessons and say that teachers make learning fun and interesting. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. In particular, they especially appreciate the residential visits and trips, which give them the opportunity to work together and challenge themselves. Pupils value the breakfast club activities, which include reading, drawing and board games.

Governors are supportive of the school and recognise that, since your appointment, you and your leadership team have enhanced the school. They acknowledge that the quality of teaching and learning has improved since your appointment. They appreciate the training that has been provided to ensure that they can hold leaders accountable for school performance. However, we agreed that there is still work to do to support and develop governors' strategic vision.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching by providing teachers with more opportunities to share good practice in and beyond school. You have addressed this well. Teachers have received support to improve their teaching from a range of providers, including from other schools in the trust. You were also asked to make sure that pupils are provided with more opportunities to correct and improve their work. Again, this has been done successfully. Pupils know how to edit and improve their work, especially in writing, where they use an effective range of vocabulary and punctuation. You have been less successful in addressing the need to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged. Typically, a below average proportion of pupils still reach the higher standards of attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6. Although current most-able pupils are being challenged increasing well, you agree that further work is needed so that this is consistently the case.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong culture in the school of keeping pupils safe. Staff have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding pupils. Staff are well trained and they know how to raise concerns about pupils' welfare or safety. Leaders check the effectiveness of this training through termly updates and reviews.

The introduction of a dedicated leader for social, emotional, mental health and well-being (SEMH) further complements and strengthens the care and well-being of pupils and their families. One parent, commenting on how the 'Rubies' girls' club had really helped her daughter's confidence, said: 'I can't believe how confident and self-assured she now is. It's all down to how the school values the whole child.'

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are appropriately trained. The school's security checks on staff are accurate and contain all the relevant information. All staff are familiar with the school's electronic system for recording concerns about pupils, however small. The school's records show that when a risk to pupils arises, leaders work effectively with parents to protect children. They involve other agencies when required and persevere until they know that pupils' needs have been fully met.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at whether learning is getting off to a good start in the early years. This is because, in the past, a much lower than average proportion of children have reached a good level of development by the end of Reception. The new early years leader, together with you, has introduced new strategies for teaching in both Nursery and Reception classes and provision is improving rapidly as a result.
- I found that all adults, under the watchful eye of the early years leader, are adept at moving children's learning on through high-quality talk. Children form strong relationships with adults and become confident learners as a result. Children currently are achieving well in relation to their starting points and are now being much better prepared for learning in Year 1 than in the past. They make good gains in mastering the sounds that letters make and the correct alignment of numbers and letters.
- Your early years leader has created an attractive indoor environment, which develops children's natural skills of curiosity. All indoor activities are supported by clear learning objectives. The recording of children's work and participation in all activities is accurate and identifies the next steps in learning. However, the outdoor learning environment is not of equally high quality. We agreed that addressing this would improve early years provision even further.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage has, typically, been below average. For this reason, I wanted to look at whether

the most able pupils are being challenged to reach their full potential. You and your leadership team have already supported teachers so that they challenge most-able pupils regularly in all key stages in all curriculum areas. This is now paying off. In mathematics, for example, you have improved teachers' subject knowledge so that they can plan and challenge pupils more successfully.

- Teachers' questioning in mathematics is more incisive and challenging. Opportunities for pupils to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills have been strengthened. In writing, pupils' books show that teachers challenge pupils to use a wide range of vocabulary and use an increasing range of writing techniques. Opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects are plentiful. Even so, your efforts to increase the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards are still hampered because work is still not consistently challenging enough. Continuing to address this, as you agree, remains an important next step.
- The teaching of reading is good overall. Pupils read high-quality books. These books help improve pupils' understanding of how a text is written and pupils apply this well to develop their own writing. Overall, pupils demonstrate a good awareness and ability to use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. However, a below average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Opportunities for pupils to practise their letters and sounds through reading books are still sometimes overlooked.
- You and your senior leaders have worked with parents to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce persistent absenteeism for some pupils. Your systems to track attendance are good and you follow up any absence swiftly. This includes phone calls and home visits, attendance plans with parents who struggle to bring their children into school and the use of the SEMHW lead to support parents and carers. As a result, attendance has improved and is very close to the national average. Current analysis shows that the attendance of a small minority of disadvantaged pupils is improving, with some significant improvements in the attendance of individuals.
- You asked if I would look at the SEMHW provision in school and I agreed. You had identified that pupils in the school needed opportunities to discuss and use strategies that support their well-being. This included the pupils in the three support bases. As a result, pupils feel well supported. The support from dedicated pastoral staff, ably assisted by a school mental health nurse and a counsellor, has resulted in pupils being confident and able to use strategies that help them. One project, based on boosting girls' self-esteem, has worked well. A group of older girls told me: 'We feel really confident now to go out and be whatever we want to be. The sky's the limit.'
- Finally, I looked at how well pupils understood about keeping themselves safe in school and in the wider community. Pupils say that they know about using the internet safely and were clear about the ways in which what they learned in school could be used in their community. You have made sure that a number of community visitors regularly come into school. One example is the local police officer who visits weekly to help children with their reading. One boy told me: 'She comes into school in her uniform. Before this I was a bit wary of the police

but she's shown me that they're people just like me.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged so that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 increases to at least average
- the quality of outdoor learning in the early years is improved so that it is as good as that indoors
- pupils practise their letters and sounds more regularly through the books they read
- governors are more strategic in holding leaders to account.

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

Jen Cave
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, pastoral leaders and the SEMHW lead. I also met two members of the governing body and the local authority adviser. I conducted a tour of the school with you, met staff and spoke to many pupils, both in classes and at breaktimes. I visited all classrooms to observe teaching and the three support bases. I met with a group of pupils during the day and I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. I also conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work alongside five middle leaders, and I spoke at length to the leaders for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding and social, emotional, mental health and well-being. I reviewed the nine responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised attendance data, your assessment information, school improvement planning, self-evaluation, the record of security checks on staff and other safeguarding documentation, procedures and practices.