

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 January 2017

Mrs Shirley Welsh
Headteacher
Whinfield Primary School
Augusta Close
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 3HT

Dear Mrs Welsh

Short inspection of Whinfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created a positive, industrious culture in which adults ensure that children are firmly at the centre of their endeavours. The warm ethos of the school is inviting; pupils delight in coming to school each day and enjoy positive, respectful relationships with staff. A vibrant buzz of learning is perceptible throughout many of the bright, attractive learning spaces you have remodelled. The majority of parents agree that their child is well looked after and their needs are being met effectively. One parent's comment encapsulated the views expressed by several: 'My child is not simply taught but nurtured and inspired to be the very best he can.'

Despite instability in staffing, a good quality of teaching and learning has been maintained across key stages due to your high expectations. Recommendations at the previous inspection have been tackled head on. The mathematics curriculum has been reviewed and closer heed paid to pupils' existing skills and abilities to inform planning. You have instilled shared expectations in terms of the presentation of pupils' work. As a result, the rate and consistency of pupils' progress has been maintained in line with national averages across subjects. You are not, however, complacent and strive continuously for betterment. You understand the need to keep parents better informed about periods of change, appreciating that staff turbulence since the previous inspection has been unsettling for some. Also, you have rightly identified that further work is needed in key stage 2 to deepen the quality of pupils' writing.

To increase the effectiveness of the wider leadership team, you have developed the role of team and subject leaders. You have provided good-quality development opportunities for staff and improved the consistency with which practices and performance are monitored. The actions of leaders at all levels are now firmly focused on the difference they can make to pupils' progress. Responsibility and accountability are shared commodities and there is a united vision for moving the school forward. Fittingly, leaders agree on the need to further improve the rates of progress of some key groups, particularly disadvantaged pupils and a proportion of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Ambition for pupils is evident in leaders' accurate, honest evaluation of the school's performance and in their detailed improvement planning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers have made sure that the safety and protection of pupils are foremost in their minds and prioritised in school-wide practices. Safer recruitment practices are stringently adhered to, meaning that appropriate checks are in place to protect pupils. The school site is well maintained and secure. Training for staff and governors is regularly updated to take account of the most recent guidance and legislative information. This means that staff are clear about the potential signs of harm, abuse or extremism and understand how and to whom they should refer any concerns. Diligence in record-keeping and consistency in reporting procedures ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are protected.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents agree. Leaders and managers are diligent in addressing any instances of repeated absence. Overall attendance is good. Pupils described the school as 'bully-free' and 'perfect'. Although a small number of parents expressed some concerns about bullying behaviours, evidence gleaned from inspection corroborated pupils' views that any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with firmly and fairly by adults.

Inspection findings

- Over time your actions have successfully reduced differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in terms of phonics and reading in key stage 1. Regular discussions with teaching staff about pupils' progress mean that barriers to learning are identified and tackled in a timely manner. Leaders and teachers use information effectively to ensure that those pupils slipping behind are supported to catch up. Improvement plans for this group focus on the correct priorities. You recognise that more work is needed to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 2, perform in line with others nationally, in each subject.
- The needs of pupils who require additional support for special educational needs and/or disabilities are managed diligently by an experienced coordinator. Pupils were unanimous in their praise for the support that they receive in school, describing adults as 'respectful', 'interested' and 'going above and beyond' in terms of meeting their individual needs. Leaders, however, share and understand

the frustrations of a few parents regarding response times from some external agencies. Leaders' tenacity and their persistent pursuit of required resources, however, is leading to most pupils in this group currently making good or better progress from their different starting points.

- Pupils enjoy writing; they talk with enthusiasm about the range of opportunities and stimuli that teachers provide. They find writing within different historical and science topics particularly inspiring. Pupils' books and pieces of work on display demonstrate pride in presentation. Outcomes in 2016 show that the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reaching and exceeding expected standards in writing was higher than the national average. In key stage 2, the proportion reaching expected standards matched that seen nationally. Fewer pupils in Year 6, however, reached a depth in writing, compared with the national average. Leaders have taken appropriate steps to address issues and recognise that continued effort will be required to ensure that more pupils exceed expectations in writing over time.
- Teachers and pupils have a shared understanding of expectations regarding behaviour. Pupils understand the links between behaviour and effective learning. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy in a consistent manner. As a result, polite, inquisitive pupils behave well. They listen respectfully to each other and to adults' requests. Pupils' conduct indoors and out is sensible and safe. Playtimes are happy affairs and pupils say they have lots of 'really kind friends'. Parents and pupils are enjoying the regular online updates which you introduced to celebrate success. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and pupils are confident that 'teachers always listen' if problems arise.
- Since the previous inspection nine teachers are new to the school. Several members of staff have been promoted to leadership roles internally and elsewhere. Four experienced members of staff retired. You have managed this turbulent period successfully by putting pupils first and maintaining good standards of teaching and learning. Some parents have found this period of instability concerning and you have sought to allay fears in various ways. Weekly newsletters and more regular opportunities for parents to come into school have been introduced and are appreciated by many parents. The availability of senior leaders and teachers to meet with parents is also highly valued. You have recently taken steps to increase your own interactions with parents and plans are in place to enable you to feature more visibly within the school community in future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who need to catch up, make faster progress enabling them to do so
- a higher proportion of pupils, particularly in key stage 2, exceed age-related expectations in writing
- parents are kept fully informed about periods of change and the impact these may have on children's experience and education

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and managers. I also met with a group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with parents at the school gate and took account of 46 free text opinions as well as 62 parental responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I talked with pupils and staff informally during breaks and in lessons and considered the 12 staff responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. No pupils responded to the pupil survey. I examined pupils' work and evaluated recent information about the progress of pupils. I considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and records regarding behaviour and safety. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. During this inspection, I paid particular attention to disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, standards of writing in key stage 2, the management of behaviour and wider perceptions of leadership and management.