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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 March 2017

Mr Edwin Squire
Headteacher
Billingham South Community Primary School
Belasis Avenue
Billingham
Cleveland
TS23 1BE

Dear Mr Squire

Short inspection of Billingham South Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 October 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 your appointments, you and your deputy headteacher have worked relentlessly to build on the strengths noted at the last inspection and create a school that reflects your aims and ambitions. Your shared vision around respect, resilience, fulfilment and excellence informs the day-to-day working of staff and pupils and drives your school improvement priorities. Consequently, staff and pupils say that they are proud to work at the school and have welcomed the changes you have implemented.

In your pursuit of continual improvement, you have tackled underperformance where it has existed and built the capacity of school leaders at all levels, including governors, to help drive forward necessary changes. Consequently, where issues have arisen, you have been able to act quickly to address them. For example, a drop in the rates of progress made by pupils in key stage two in 2015 saw a recovery in 2016, with pupils making better progress in reading and writing when compared to that seen nationally.

You have built on the strengths identified at the previous inspection and further enhanced the pupils' enjoyment of learning through improved opportunities to apply and deepen learning across a range of subjects. Where issues were identified at the last inspection, these have been addressed and you have continued to maintain a focus on these areas for further development. For example, the support given to

pupils to improve their writing has seen the progress pupils make match and sometimes exceed that seen nationally. You remain a highly inclusive community where pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive.

Pupils feel safe at school, they value the support they receive from adults and feel that their views are listened to. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident it is dealt with robustly when it does. They have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying. They enjoy their lessons and talk maturely about the importance of resilience and excellence. When they get stuck, they feel well supported to improve their learning. As a result, pupils concentrate well in lessons and stick to tasks even when they are difficult. In addition, pupils are polite and respectful. They move around school in an orderly fashion, holding doors open for others and remembering to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

The governors have a regular presence in the school and consequently have good knowledge of what is working well and what needs to improve. Where action is being taken, they have a comprehensive and detailed understanding of what is being done to deliver improvement. Recent additions and actions, including training and skills audits, have enhanced governors' skills and ability to challenge and support school leaders. However, school improvement plans do not always do you and your actions justice. Some of the actions being taken are not fully captured or detailed. In addition, the measures to gauge the difference your actions should make lack sufficient detail, especially during the course of the year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders are sharply focused on ensuring pupil safety and that safeguarding arrangements are always at the forefront of everyone's thinking. Secure systems and procedures are in place and high-quality records are well maintained. These are kept under review to ensure that good practice is built on. Frequent training and updates for all staff and governors ensure well-informed and reflective practice. You work hard to engage with national and local priorities, tackling issues pertinent to the school and the community it serves. The curriculum is responsive to emerging issues and pupils feel protected and know how to keep themselves safe when online. Records show that bullying is rare, and where incidents do occur, detailed accounts are kept and reviewed to check for emerging patterns for different types of bullying. Reviews of referrals and recording of incidents are factored into discussions with staff to ensure a consistency of practice and a sharpened focus at all times. Regular meetings at a senior level, including the designated governor, ensure that safeguarding is reviewed and required action taken. Your approach ensures that there is a culture throughout your school in which all staff recognise and act on their safeguarding responsibilities.

Inspection findings

- The number of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, especially disadvantaged pupils, while reducing, is still too high. You and your deputy headteacher have taken direct action to support and increasingly challenge families to get their

children to attend school more regularly. Use of fines, wider use of other agencies and home visits are beginning to make a difference. Consequently, the number of children who miss school frequently has begun to fall.

- The Additional Resource Provision (ARP) supports a number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Staff work diligently to ensure that pupils are well supported and succeed. These pupils are able to access dedicated support and teaching and curriculum opportunities alongside other pupils in the rest of the school. As a result, the vast majority of pupils make at least expected progress from their various starting points and most make better than expected progress. This is because teaching is well planned and responds well to the individual interests and needs of the pupils.
- In key stage 1 in 2016 most pupils made the progress expected of them, but a few did not move on to the higher standard they could have achieved. School leaders have taken immediate action to address this. Staff training, additional resources, especially for mathematics, and a review of provision for the most able pupils have been implemented. Evidence seen during the inspection shows that this is making a difference, with increased numbers of pupils now working above age-related expectations. The most able readers are developing skills across a variety of texts and are encouraged to reflect on their reading to think about the content of their books carefully. School leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to support the most able pupils to extend their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in the school. In reading and writing at key stage 2, they make better progress than other pupils do nationally and those that need to are beginning to catch up. In mathematics, they make similar progress to that seen nationally. In key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils in the mainstream provision are making at least expected progress, but not enough are going on to higher standards. This has begun to be addressed and evidence seen during the inspection shows that interventions are better targeted at supporting individuals' needs to push them on to challenge their learning. As a consequence, increased numbers of disadvantaged pupils are now working beyond age-related expectations.
- The teaching of reading and writing was a priority following the last inspection. Improved standards of writing are evident in pupils' books, which show pride in the presentation of pupils' work. This is because tasks are well planned, engage the interest of pupils and are well matched to their needs. Pupils have a positive attitude to reading and writing and a clear knowledge of what is required to develop their learning further. Consequently, pupils now make better progress in reading and writing than seen nationally, and those that need to catch up are making better than expected progress.
- School leaders recognise that although the progress in mathematics across key stage 2 matches that seen nationally, it is not as strong as that in reading and writing in the school. Action has been taken to address this, including introducing new mathematics curriculum support materials, staff training and a sharper focus

on reasoning, logic and problem-solving. Close monitoring is ensuring a consistency in approach and expectation to promote challenge in lessons for all pupils, with a clear focus on using and applying new learning in a variety of contexts. Pupils recognise these approaches and say that they now have to 'think harder' and 'stick at it' more in mathematics lessons. School performance information and evidence seen in books shows that increasing numbers of pupils are now working at and above age-related expectations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions to help disadvantaged pupils attend more regularly are intensified, and recent improvements in attendance are built on
- current rates of progress for most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in key stage 1 are built on so that the proportion of pupils operating at greater depth matches that seen nationally
- information provided to governors is sharpened to provide more detail of planned actions and clear milestones to help check if measures are on track.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, senior leaders and a group of governors. I spoke with pupils, including a selected group of pupils, about the school and listened to some pupils read. I looked in pupils' books and reviewed information provided by the school about the progress pupils are making. I visited classrooms to observe several lessons alongside you and the deputy headteacher. I evaluated information and comments from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I was particularly interested in seeing how the school addresses the following:

- levels of attendance for disadvantaged pupils
- pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2
- pupils' progress in key stage 1, especially the most able
- the quality of support for pupils in the Additional Resource Provision
- the effectiveness of safeguarding.