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11 March 2019

Mrs Joanne Eagleton
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Eagleton

Short inspection of Ecclesfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As executive headteacher, you provide very effective leadership and lead the school with commitment and determination. You are ably supported by your head of school and assistant headteacher and have the full support of and confidence of your staff, governors and pupils. Staff are proud to work at the school and want the very best for the pupils that they teach. Leaders and teachers work very effectively as a team to achieve improvement priorities that have been identified through accurate self-evaluation.

You explained that previous weaker teaching and changes to staffing caused below-average progress for pupils by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 and 2018. You acted decisively to make sure that weaker teaching was quickly addressed and you have worked successfully to ensure that the quality of teaching is now strong in all areas of the school. Staffing is now stable and leaders' checks on pupils' progress are ensuring that current pupils are making good progress. You carefully track the progress of all pupils and quickly identify groups and individuals who are falling behind, working with teachers to plan how to address gaps in pupils' learning. Regular checks on the quality of teaching are used to provide training and development opportunities for teachers, which they welcome. All staff are committed to working together across the federation, as well as more widely with other schools, to further develop their teaching.

You have nurtured a calm and purposeful environment for learning, characterised by caring relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are happy and enjoy the school, as shown by their low rates of absence and their good behaviour. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Most parents and carers who made their views known are supportive of the school and speak highly of the work of you and your team. As one parent commented to me during the inspection, 'I can't say any more than this is a brilliant school!' As another commented on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View: 'My children are both making exceptional progress and we are incredibly happy with both class teachers who work hard to ensure that lessons are exciting and engaging. My children come home with a love of learning.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. You have addressed this area for improvement well. Teachers at Ecclesfield Primary have strong subject knowledge and are effective in providing challenging work for pupils so that their progress is good. Pupils develop their basic skills effectively and produce high-quality writing in English and in other curriculum subjects. You have rightly identified that a higher proportion of pupils could attain a greater depth of learning in writing by the end of key stage 2, and are taking action to address this.

You were also asked to improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders check closely on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. Since the previous inspection, you and your local authority improvement partner have provided guidance to subject leaders to develop their skills. Subject leaders are closely involved in all aspects of checking on the quality of teaching and learning and analysing how well pupils are progressing. They regularly review the strengths and areas for development of their subject areas. They report these to the governors and identify what actions have been taken, what effect these have had and their next steps.

There have been considerable changes to the governing body since the last inspection as a result of the school's federation with a local school, including the appointment of a new chair of the governing body. Governors bring a wide range of very relevant skills, knowledge and expertise to their roles. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance and receive useful and timely information to allow them to carry out their roles. Governors regularly visit the school and provide good support to you and hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture in the school of keeping pupils safe and secure. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all statutory requirements are very well met. Senior leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out when appointing new members of staff. Records are detailed and of high quality.

All staff receive regular training in keeping pupils safe from all forms of abuse. You review and update training arrangements to take account of current guidance and

refresh your knowledge of specific risks which pupils may encounter. The designated safeguarding leaders have received appropriate training and are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities. They always act on any concerns reported by staff. If a child protection referral is made, staff are tenacious in following it up with appropriate outside agencies.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They know that there is always someone they can talk with if they have any worries. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, expressed mixed views about bullying. Pupils told me that bullying very rarely happens in school and, if it did, they are confident that an adult would deal with it immediately. The school's own records indicate that bullying incidents are rare.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry we should follow. The first line of enquiry looked at how effectively leaders are improving progress in writing for pupils by the end of key stage 2. This is because, in 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress has been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally and the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth of learning has been below average. Staff have received training in how to improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing. As a result, staff plan an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. Pupils write factual reports, letters and instructions, as well as stories and poems. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote a non-chronological report about crime and punishment in industrial Britain. Pupils told me about practising their writing to enter a 500 words story-writing competition.
- There is a consistent approach to teaching spelling across the school. As a result, most pupils spell common words correctly. Spelling is also a focus of pupils' writing. Pupils receive guidance from their teachers to ensure that their grammar, punctuation and spelling are accurate. Teachers are incorporating the development of spelling skills within the teaching of writing.
- Pupils' written work shows that their work is presented neatly, and they are building on their prior learning over time. Evidence in pupils' books shows that teachers plan sequences of learning that help pupils to write purposefully. As a result, current pupils are making good progress. However, you have identified that a higher proportion of pupils could attain a greater depth of learning in writing. This is a priority in your school development plan.
- My next line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are addressing the progress middle-attaining pupils make by the end of key stage 2 in reading. This is because, in Year 6 in 2018, these pupils made weaker progress than other pupils from their individual starting points.
- You have improved the way in which teachers plan reading lessons so that pupils are reading more challenging texts and developing a wider vocabulary and a range of reading skills. Teachers regularly provide high-quality texts with sophisticated vocabulary. Pupils are becoming adept at using dictionaries. For example, Year 5 pupils were able to define words such as 'enduring', 'intertwined'

and 'enigmatic'. Pupils in Year 4 discussed the meaning of the words 'muster' and 'imitate'.

- Pupils enthusiastically told me about their favourite authors, such as John Green, Dav Pilkey, Anthony Horowitz and Roald Dahl. The school promotes a love of reading well. Current pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, are making good progress in reading, with an increased proportion reaching and exceeding age-related expectations.
- My final line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are ensuring that the progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 in mathematics is at least good. This is because, in Year 6 in 2018, pupils' progress was below average.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and explanations in mathematics are good, and they regularly ask pupils challenging questions to extend their learning. Pupils are often given time to talk to each other about their learning in mathematics. In a Year 6 lesson we visited, pupils confidently discussed how to interpret a range of line graphs.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning which have been caused by weaker teaching in the past. They then ensure that pupils have the opportunity to catch up.
- Staff have been trained in new approaches to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving abilities and given a better understanding of how pupils learn in mathematics. However, these approaches are not embedded well enough in all classes across key stage 2 and so pupils are not always given opportunities to apply their skills by completing problem-solving and reasoning tasks.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils attain a greater depth of learning in writing by the end of key stage 2
- all teachers plan more regular opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to develop their mathematical skills through reasoning and problem-solving.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Randall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the head of school, the assistant headteacher, the English and mathematics leaders, 11 members of staff and a group of nine pupils from key stage 2. I also spoke to four governors. I talked to a representative of the local authority. I spoke informally with pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you and your leaders, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work.

I took account of 38 free-text responses to Parent View, 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and seven responses to the pupil survey. I also met with nine parents before school. I evaluated a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement and attendance. I undertook a review of the school's website.