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30 March 2017

Miss Christine Barlow
Headteacher
Mill Lane Primary School
Mill Lane
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Dear Miss Barlow

Short inspection of Mill Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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 May 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 and your deputy work together effectively as a senior leadership team. You are honest in your self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have high expectations of staff and you and your deputy are accurate in your evaluation of teaching. You have taken effective action to ensure that standards of teaching are good. Pupils and parents hold you and the school in high regard. Pupils appreciate the effective rewards and sanctions for behaviour, especially the 'thinking room' where pupils reflect on any misbehaviour. The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils work with good motivation and concentration and cooperate well. You support individual pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well.

Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are passionate in their commitment and business-like in their approach. Your headteacher's reports provide clear and accessible information that enable governors to focus on relevant questions. Governors use their expertise well to hold leaders to account.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers match tasks to the needs of different groups and inform pupils about their next steps in learning. Pupils of different abilities are working at an appropriate level of challenge and teachers tailor learning to their different needs in the mixed-age classes. Teachers give

constructive feedback and guidance to pupils about how they are doing. Pupils benefit from the regular opportunities to correct and improve their work.

By reorganising the early years into separate Nursery and Reception areas, you have established purposeful learning environments that are strengthening children's personal, social and emotional development in Nursery and promoting their progress in Reception. You have improved the resources and activities for literacy and mathematics in both areas. You rightly aim to increase the proportion of boys that reach a good level of development and to improve children's development in mathematics and literacy.

In 2016, the progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 2 was significantly above average in reading and mathematics. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils was in line with others nationally. Attainment was well above the national average in mathematics, reading and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was due to highly effective teaching and well-targeted additional support for Year 6 pupils. Weaker performance in writing reflected the unfamiliarity of teachers with the new national assessment criteria. Teachers have assessed that more of the current Year 6 are writing at the high standard and samples of high-quality writing by the most able support this view.

Attainment and progress at the end of key stage 1 declined in 2016 due to past weaknesses in teaching that you have tackled effectively. Weaker progress in mathematics was due to weaker teaching of number and calculation. Teaching is stronger now and pupils are making better progress. The leadership of mathematics has been more effective at key stage 2 than at key stage 1 and this is an area for further development.

You have strengthened the rigour of assessment by using both teacher assessment and formal tests. However, summary information about progress over time in different subjects and year groups is still at a formative stage, due to the national changes in assessment. The information available is not always analysed sharply enough to review emerging patterns in performance.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and up to date. You have trained several staff to lead on safeguarding matters and you are scrupulous in investigating any concerns. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Records are orderly and chronological. You have improved recent case files by logging events and actions in more formal and consistent detail. On occasion, delays in response from social services have limited your access to information that would be helpful in understanding and promptly supporting a pupil's needs.

Pupils feel safe and know what to do if they do not feel safe. They explain well how to be safe on the internet and how to deal with cyber bullying or unwanted texts or messages. They know they should not give out personal information. Parents said

they were pleased about how well their children understood how to be safe from grooming.

Inspection findings

- You have a good understanding of the progress of individual pupils. You are assessing pupils more frequently, half-termly rather than termly. You are using a wider range of evidence to check pupils' progress accurately. You regularly review the impact of actions taken by staff to tackle any underachievement.
- The deputy headteacher and Reception teacher have worked closely and productively to improve the early years. In the past, the combined Nursery and Reception unit did not focus sharply enough on the developmental needs of children at different stages. In the now separate Nursery and Reception, boys as well as girls are playing and learning well in purposeful, well-planned activity, supported by accurate ongoing assessment of their development. With an improved range of resources, teaching and support staff are leading activities that engage children well and enable them to develop their mathematical and literacy skills. It is too early to see the impact on the proportion achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years.
- There was a dip in phonics outcomes in the national screening check in Year 1 in 2016. Accurate assessment and additional support for targeted pupils are enabling pupils in Year 1 to make better progress this year and a higher proportion are on track to reach the required standard.
- The literacy leader has provided effective training, guidance and support for the teaching of reading. This is also helping pupils to understand word problems in mathematics. Teachers' expert dialogue and questioning about the precise use and understanding of words extends pupils' vocabulary well, deepens their comprehension and results in strong progress in reading at key stage 2.
- Teachers' clear explanations enable pupils to develop their understanding securely and teachers' effective use of examples enables pupils to apply their knowledge well in writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent and planned changes in the leadership of early years, key stage 1 and mathematics enable pupils to make consistently good progress and increase attainment at the end of the early years and key stage 1
- the rigour and consistency of assessment are further developed to ensure that leaders and governors have a clear analysis of the progress pupils are making in different subjects and year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy, middle leaders, a group of pupils, and the chair and two members, of the governing body. I also spoke to parents dropping off children for school. I observed teaching in all classes jointly with the deputy headteacher. I considered the learning in pupils' books and I listened to pupils read.

I checked the school website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, the school development plan, and safeguarding records. I took account of 13 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire including six written responses. I also took account of 18 responses from staff and four responses from pupils.