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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sarah Kitching
Headteacher
Wolsingham Primary School
Upper Town
Wolsingham
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
DL13 3ET

Dear Mrs Sarah Kitching

Short inspection of Wolsingham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 2016, 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained, and improved upon, the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully created a calm, welcoming ethos and have secured a culture of high expectations among the staff. The overwhelming majority of parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are well taught and well looked after.

Pupils feel secure and happy. Consequently, they are eager to attend and apply themselves to learning. Rates of attendance are consistently above national averages and improving year on year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently missing from school is low. A perceptible buzz of excitement about learning, coupled with a strong work ethic, is particularly tangible in upper key stage 2.

At the previous inspection, leaders were challenged to raise attainment and progress. Since then, attainment in key stage 1 and 2 has risen in all subjects. The overall standards that pupils reached by the end of each key stage in 2015 were significantly above those seen nationally and the unvalidated results for 2016 look equally promising. Mathematics is an evident strength, with attainment outcomes rising steadily across the last three years in both key stages.

You have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The correct priorities are tackled. Your evaluation of the school's work to date and the improvement plans that you draw together make this clear. In response to

weaknesses identified in 2015 in the early years, for example, action was swiftly taken to secure improvements. This resulted in a sharp rise in outcomes for the youngest children in 2016.

Safeguarding is effective.

All parents agree that their child feels safe at Wolsingham Primary School. Pupils themselves say that school is a safe place to be and they feel confident that teachers listen and respond to their concerns. The beneficial links you have established with other agencies and providers contribute to this positive, protective culture.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The detailed records are kept up to date, and are used effectively to inform actions and next steps. Staff and governors receive appropriate training so that they know how to keep pupils safe from harm.

Inspection findings

- You are ambitious for all pupils at the school. Staff know pupils as individuals. This prompts close attention to the needs and capabilities of each child and leads to highly positive relationships between staff and pupils. Records demonstrate that you are diligent in the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress from their different starting points in each year group. Teachers are held rigorously to account for pupils' outcomes across subjects and pay progression is tied to teachers' performance.
- Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school's work. The broad set of skills and experience that governors bring to the school means that you and other leaders, while supported by a knowledgeable governing body, are also challenged robustly and held to account for the progress of pupils. Governors draw on their extensive expertise in the field of education as well as their breadth of experiences from other backgrounds to contribute effectively to school improvement.
- From broadly average starting points, outcomes for Reception children in 2015 fell to below the national average. The proportion of both boys and girls reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below others nationally. Due to decisive action being taken by leaders, this decline was reversed and in 2016, 94% of children reached a good level of development. This indicates that the correct priorities are being tackled robustly and means that children are being better prepared for the key stage 1 curriculum. You are aware that this improvement needs to be consolidated and built upon.
- The proportion of pupils reaching an expected standard in the national phonics screening test was well above the national figure in 2015. This success was sustained in 2016 and shows that leaders tackled the weaker outcomes seen in 2014 successfully. Teachers and pupils observed during the inspection demonstrated a strong knowledge and understanding of phonics and spelling. Many pupils, just embarking on the Year 2 curriculum, discussed root words and suffixes knowledgeably, using and applying their skills expertly. Pupils are therefore consistently well prepared to meet the demands of the English

curriculum in Year 2.

- In key stage 2, attainment in 2015 in mathematics, reading and English grammar, spelling and punctuation, was significantly above national averages. Work seen currently in pupils' books and unvalidated results for 2016 suggest that high standards in these areas are being maintained. Attainment and progress in writing, however, has been broadly in line with national averages in recent years. Although pupils' word choices and writing content can be impressive, presentation and handwriting are less so. There is room here for further improvement, particularly for pupils of average or lower ability. Your improvement plans are correctly focused upon this priority.
- The majority of pupils are delightfully proud of their school and find it enjoyable. Smiles and happy faces certainly abound. Pupils are considerate of each other as well as adults, and playtimes are cheerful affairs. The environment is secure and well looked after, with an enticing range of opportunities for play and exploration. For example, parent volunteers worked in harmony with the school to create the impressive sand pit in the early years playground. The manner in which pupils move around the school is calm and lunchtimes are harmonious. 'I wouldn't want to go anywhere else' captured the views expressed by a group of older pupils.
- Curriculum leaders are passionate and well informed about their subjects and, as a result, pupils talk with enthusiasm about a wide range of topics. Projects based on the first world war in key stage 2 and one on animals in key stage 1 were particular favourites. Liberal displays and photographs of historical, scientific and artistic endeavours undertaken across the year demonstrate a real breadth of study. Some aspects of topical or sensitive curriculum matter, such as equality, diversity and the life choices of others, are less well established. Leaders agree, and improvement plans document the manner in which the values that Britain holds dear will be woven more determinedly throughout the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision in the early years improves further, paying particular regard to the development of basic skills in English and mathematics
- standards of writing in key stage 2 improve, especially the quality of presentation and handwriting
- British values are actively promoted across a curriculum where pupils have regular opportunities to express their opinions, ask questions and listen to the views of others.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, your senior and subject leaders, a large group of governors, including the interim chair of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority, including your school improvement partner. I listened to pupils read and spoke with them formally and informally during breaktimes and in lessons. We jointly observed sessions in most classes. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, examining case studies about vulnerable pupils. I also considered other school information and documentation, including the school's improvement plans and self-evaluation statements. I examined policies and information posted on the school website. I evaluated the work in pupils' books and conducted a scrutiny of the work of children in the early years alongside senior leaders. I also took the views of parents, pupils and staff into account from their responses to questionnaires.