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Mrs Anita Jefferies
Headteacher
Archibald Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jefferies

Short inspection of Archibald Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are instrumental in driving the culture of continual improvement which is shared by your team of dedicated staff. Since the previous inspection you have, systematically, addressed aspects of the school's performance which needed to improve. This has led to significant improvements in the standards achieved by pupils at the end of key stage 1, and particularly across key stage 2, in reading, writing and mathematics. You know every pupil exceptionally well and every pupil's education matters to you. You understand the vital role that the school plays in giving pupils the skills they need to succeed in life. Leaders have worked relentlessly to ensure that pupils develop the effective learning habits that will serve them well in the future.

You are, rightly, determined to ensure that you do not lose sight of the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum in your mission to raise standards of academic attainment in English and mathematics. For example, the school's work, partnered with the Royal Shakespeare Company, enables all pupils to perform works of Shakespeare publicly. This has been instrumental in building pupils' confidence and self-esteem. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were brimming with excitement as they built code to programme robotic cars to overcome challenges and obstacles. Pupils love their time at school because staff work hard to make sure that activities capture their interest. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they throw themselves into every activity with gusto.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Curriculum opportunities, such as the work linked to Remembrance Day and the school's own 'Poppies' installation, elicited high-quality, thoughtful, written responses from pupils.

Pupils show respect for others as they go about their business in this happy, bright and well-maintained school.

Since the previous inspection you have constantly sought to improve the quality of teaching in the school. You provide clear and detailed feedback to staff, including teaching assistants, to help them to develop their skills. Leaders regularly meet with teaching staff to consider the achievement of their pupils and to intervene where pupils are not making the progress they should. This has contributed to the notable improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. More pupils are now well prepared for the next stage of their education as a result. You know that you have more to do to help pupils to make even faster progress, so that more reach the highest levels of attainment. You have already started to address this and pupils' work demonstrates that an increasing number of pupils in key stage 2 are beginning to move towards those higher standards.

At the previous inspection, you were charged with raising the standards reached by children in the early years and asked to do more to work with their parents. Leaders have been successful in engaging with parents when children join the school and this was reflected in written comments from a parent during the inspection. You have taken action to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in early years. This is beginning to make a difference to children's achievement but you recognise that there is more to do to ensure that attainment rises more rapidly, particularly for disadvantaged children.

Historically, pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have not achieved as well as pupils nationally in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You recognised that this needed to improve and have sought external support and advice to help you. Pupils' outcomes are beginning to improve this academic year, but you now need to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best, so that pupils achieve as well as they can in this aspect of their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have developed a team of leaders to support with safeguarding arrangements and you make sure that you oversee their work effectively. You have ensured that checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are robust and staff receive the training they need so that they can fulfil their responsibilities. You are never complacent about safeguarding and continually seek external scrutiny to help you to improve what you do. This has resulted in the introduction of regular 'supervision' sessions with your safeguarding team, so that you can review individual cases and check on the progress being made.

You prioritise work to support the safety of pupils. This begins in early years where children learn about hygiene, including brushing their teeth well and washing their hands carefully. Throughout the school, pupils are involved in leading anti-bullying messages, including developing a school charter. You are proud of being a 'Rights Respecting School', where behaviour and bullying issues are rare.

Governors play an important role in safeguarding and receive detailed and regular updates on the impact of the school's work. This information has ensured that they have the knowledge and skills necessary, so that they can determine the quality of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Over time, the attendance of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, has fluctuated and has been below the national average. You have a team of staff who work to address barriers to good attendance with families and they are able to demonstrate considerable success with individual cases. You have also introduced more rewards for pupils who attend well. This academic year, attendance is beginning to improve and there has been a slight increase in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' absence remains, however, above the national average and you know you need to tackle this with urgency to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged by poor attendance. This includes making sure that, in your plans, you set precise and measurable targets for the improvements you expect in relation to the attendance of groups of pupils. This will enable governors to keep a close check on the impact of your work.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I was keen to explore how you have increased the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reaching the expected standard for their age and improved pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. You have implemented a programme of forensic assessment which ensures that all staff are aware of the precise gaps in pupils' learning which need to be addressed. You have increased staffing levels so that teachers work with smaller groups of pupils. The quality of teaching has been improved through carefully chosen professional development, for example in guided reading. The impact of this was clear, during the inspection, in a Year 4 class. The teacher questioned pupils expertly in relation to their reading, teasing out answers and probing to ensure that they developed the skills they need to infer and deduce from the text. Pupils in key stage 2 are benefiting from regular opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. Skilful teaching is ensuring that their progress is strong in this area of learning and more pupils are beginning to work at higher levels.
- You are quick to identify areas where pupils' progress is not as strong as it could be. You and your governing body recognised, through your 'raising achievement committee', that pupils needed to make better progress in mathematics in key stage 1. You have experimented with a new curriculum in Year 1, which is providing better progression within sequences of lessons for pupils. As a result, progress has improved and you have plans to extend this approach into Year 2. However, at times, teaching does not deepen pupils' learning sufficiently well in mathematics, particularly those who have the capability to achieve at the highest levels. Teachers do not encourage pupils routinely to draw on their existing mathematics knowledge to make links between different aspects of mathematics or to recognise patterns.
- Leaders have successfully improved engagement with parents to support children's learning in early years. 'Scrimble Time', at the start of each nursery session, enables parents to help children to develop their mark-making skills and to begin to write their name. Families have also benefited from resources and support, including an after-school club, to develop the skills to help their children at home with phonics. Leaders also ensure that parents are kept up to date with children's learning by regularly sending home observation notes of what children are achieving in the Nursery and Reception Years.
- Historically, the proportion of children reaching the expected level of development at the end of the Reception Year has not improved quickly enough. You have taken action to

improve the quality of teaching and to strengthen the leadership of early years. You have invested significantly in resources to improve the learning environment for children and have deployed more staff to support learning. Children benefit from an attractive and stimulating environment where they can access the equipment they need. Leaders have also introduced provision for two-year-old children, so that they can make an earlier start to their education in school. These actions have begun to improve the standards reached by children. For example, more children were 'ready' for their Reception Year in September 2016 as a result of the improved teaching in nursery. Children's work evidences that there is more to do to ensure that they can accurately form their letters and numbers and that they can write with greater confidence for a range of purposes. You recognise that you need to ensure that a higher proportion of children achieve well and reach the nationally expected standard, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so that they are well equipped for the curriculum in Year 1.

- Over time, too few pupils have reached the level expected for their age in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You have increased the resources available to staff and have changed the pupil groupings so that teaching can be better matched to pupils' needs. You are also meeting more frequently with teaching staff to keep a check on the progress being made in phonics. You have sought external support by commissioning an audit of your provision for phonics and have a plan in place to action the recommendations. As a result, pupils' progress is beginning to improve. You are aware that you now need to ensure that teaching in all groups is consistently securing the very best progress from pupils, so that more pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, reach the expected level in Year 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, reach the expected level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- a higher proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- pupils' attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, improves in line with the national average, and that measurable targets are set so that governors can keep a close check on this
- more pupils make faster progress to reach the higher levels of attainment in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I met with a representative of the local authority. I spoke informally to pupils during lunchtime and in lessons. I reviewed the work in a sample of pupils' books with you. I evaluated information in relation to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the performance of teachers. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), a handwritten response from a parent and the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.