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Mrs Diana Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of Birkby Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 2018, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The whole-school philosophy of 'Together we can' permeates everything you do. Pupils work extremely well with each other, supporting each other's learning. The team spirit among staff is clear for all to see. You make sure that everyone's skills are used to their best in order to benefit pupils. For example, being flexible in approach so that every child has an adult with them when reading in small groups helps pupils make exceptional progress in their use of language, and in looking closely at both fiction and non-fiction books to deepen their skills in reading. All staff are highly skilled at developing pupils' higher-level reading skills and the interrogation of texts, such as when using a story book to create their own version or exploring a timeline in a history book. The pupil premium funding is wisely spent on providing additional staff to teach the large number of eligible pupils to learn the English language.

As a local leader in education, you have brought the best of what you have seen elsewhere into your school, and adapted it to meet the needs of the pupils in your care. You have ensured that middle managers have received training in leadership

and are now effectively leading learning in their areas of responsibility. They monitor the quality of provision together so that they have a clear view of the strengths in their subject area, and any improvements that could be made. This ensures that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning.

You know all the pupils well, and parents and carers comment on how approachable you and all the staff are. Parents are extremely confident that if they had any issues, you would resolve them swiftly.

You have spent the additional funding for primary physical education (PE) and sport wisely to develop sports clubs and competitions, in addition to regular PE lessons. A focus on healthy living permeates the whole school, from the school meals, through everyone training to run one kilometre, to the support you are giving to those children who have mental health needs. You make sure pupils are happy, healthy and ready to learn.

The 'Rainbow Rules' encompass respect, duty and democracy. These support pupils well in preparing them for life in modern Britain. Parents know these rules too. One parent who spoke to me said how they had noticed that their child was now so much more respectful of others in the family and wider community. This demonstrates the exacting standards of behaviour you expect from the pupils and how this is having a wider impact on them beyond the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding is a high priority for everyone. All staff have received appropriate training. You log and monitor all concerning behaviour so that you can act quickly should there be any indications a pupil is at risk of harm. Case files are of high quality and managed online, enabling other professionals to contribute to these records so that partnership working is strong. You record precisely what pupils need and are tenacious in ensuring that children and their families receive appropriate support. When a pupil causing concern is absent from school, you endeavour to make contact with their family within three-quarters of an hour. If you are not able to, then you make sure the pupil is seen by the end of the day, and that they are safe. Adults teach children how to keep themselves safe from abuse. They also give parents helpful advice and guidance on how to keep their children safe, particularly when they are online.

Inspection findings

- Together, we saw teachers offering high-level challenge and questioning in all of the lessons we observed. This strong, consistent approach is having a very positive impact on pupils' thinking and the progress they are making. All staff check pupils' prior knowledge and understanding to ensure that the maximum learning can take place. Your own observations of lessons emphasise the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. You clearly identify the strengths in the teaching

of each member of staff and any areas for improvement. These inform teachers' appraisal targets. Leaders of learning and teaching know their subjects well and are monitoring progress and delivery effectively. They have been given every opportunity to develop their leadership skills and appreciate the high-quality mentoring and support from senior leaders. This has led to staff feeling more secure in their judgements in all areas and an improvement in outcomes for pupils, especially in science. You draw on a range of evidence when checking the quality of teaching so your judgements about standards and the effectiveness of the school are accurate.

- You have developed the role of the teaching assistants to include supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They have excellent relationships with the pupils and ensure that behaviour in the outdoors is of a high standard at all times. Play leaders selected by pupils also take their part in this.
- Phonics is embedded in all lessons and is taught effectively throughout the school. Pupils' skills are developed well as they move up through the year groups. Pupils score highly in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. They readily and accurately use their phonics knowledge to identify unknown words when reading and writing. Pupils engage in their learning because teachers make lessons interesting and fun. For example, when teaching the diverse ways 'ow' can be spelt, staff wore bandages, and pupils were given clues as to what might have happened. All the clues contained different spellings of the 'ow' sound and pupils were challenged to identify these as well as solve a 'real life' problem.
- Regular meetings to check the progress of pupils identify those whose progress is falling behind. Short, time-limited interventions are successfully put in place to rectify any misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge. The pupils currently in key stage 1 are making even more rapid progress from their different starting points than in previous years. More pupils are already operating at a greater depth of understanding. However, you are ambitious for this proportion to increase even further.
- The governors know the school well. They use visits to the school to gather valuable information by watching what is happening, focusing on a specific area of learning, and talking with staff. They also request presentations, reports and further information regarding outcomes and pupils' progress. They use this information to challenge and support you and your other leaders. Minutes of governors' meetings seen during the inspection clearly demonstrate this at sub-committee level.
- There are many ways for parents to get involved in their children's learning. Several parents told me during the inspection they really valued the weekly meetings led by a highly skilled practitioner. These meetings help parents to understand the concepts and language being taught and give them ideas and activities to support their children's learning at home. Parents said how their children were eager to learn and continued this learning independently at home. This demonstrates how you have succeeded in embedding a learning culture among pupils. Parents spoke enthusiastically of the secure, web-based records they could access to see how well their children were doing, and to which they

can contribute. Overall, they feel that communication is extremely good. They appreciate the early morning texts regarding inclement weather and other risks, and feel it shows how the safety of their children is a priority. The attendance rate has improved so that it is now in line with the national average, from below average in previous years. The rate of persistent absence is also showing a long-term decline. This is because you and your team communicate to all the importance of education and give effective support to those families who need it, to enable their children to attend school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding at key stage 1 is further increased, particularly in English and science.

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

Geoffrey Dorrity
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of the inspection was to check whether the good standards identified at the previous inspection had been maintained and to find out how well children were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. You and I observed pupils' learning together across the school. I reviewed a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I met with members of the governing body and spoke with the school improvement partner. I considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the school's own parent survey, and I spoke with nine parents. I also took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the school's own pupil survey.