

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Joanne Bromley  
Headteacher  
King Street Primary School  
High Grange Road  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6RA

Dear Mrs Bromley

### **Short inspection of King Street Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

When you took up post as headteacher at Easter last year, you worked with your staff to complete a comprehensive self-evaluation. From this, came the lengthy school improvement plan, which has guided your first year in post. Although the plan is rich in detail, it is not clear how and when you and the governors are evaluating the effects of leaders' actions to improve the school. It is clear you have improved safeguarding arrangements, tightened up the accuracy of assessment and begun to improve the quality of teaching. The staff now have more responsibilities devolved to them and have begun to contribute more to the leadership of the school. The staff work well together as a team. You feel that much has been achieved in your first year, but you acknowledge that there is still much to do to ensure that standards are good in each phase of the school and that pupils make good progress across a broad range of subjects.

In the school's last inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' reading skills and ensure that the most able pupils made better progress. To improve children's start at the school, you have remodelled early years provision. You have brought together the Nursery and Reception classes to form a single early years unit and have thoughtfully invested in new equipment and resources. Changes in staffing and new approaches to teaching and learning in the unit show promise, although the staff are still developing the way in which they teach basic skills of reading,

writing and mathematics. Some of their interactions with children are effective, but some adults lack the necessary techniques to develop and extend children's skills as they play. Nevertheless, most children grasp the sounds letters make and begin to read securely by Year 1. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check was above the national average last year. By the end of key stage 1, standards in reading were in line with those seen nationally. In recent years, pupils' progress in reading has accelerated across key stage 2. Pupils currently in the school are benefiting from studying some interesting and thought-provoking class texts. The pupils I spoke to during my lesson visits were able to summarise their current books clearly and showed a good grasp of the author's message. Most pupils enjoy books and make good progress in reading.

However, the challenge posed by teachers for the most able pupils is still too variable. During my visits to lessons, some teachers missed opportunities to stretch pupils' thinking. Tasks set were too easy for some, and some teachers were too accepting of simple answers to their questions. You have recognised this through your own monitoring and see increasing the level of challenge as one of your most important priorities to address.

During this inspection, it was good to see that pupils are continuing to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum for these subjects is generally well developed, although further work is needed in mathematics to ensure that pupils become better at reasoning and more skilled at solving problems. However, the good standards attained in English and mathematics in recent years have been achieved at the expense of learning in other subjects. My scrutiny of pupils' topic, science, art and design and technology books showed that pupils do not follow a coherent curriculum in these subjects. Subject-specific knowledge and skills are not taught in sufficient detail, and too much of the work provided is focused on reinforcing English skills. Some subjects are only covered very superficially. Pupils in Year 6 told me that they feel they have done little other than English and mathematics this year, in order to boost their attainment in national curriculum tests. Again, you have recognised this and have begun to give your staff greater licence to provide a broader and more creative diet of learning. You have introduced more outdoor learning opportunities and expanded extra-curricular provision. However, the school is not yet delivering pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Most parents and carers I spoke to or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, are pleased with the school. They welcome the more active role of the school council, which has given their children a louder voice in the school. Most parents feel that their children make good progress and everyone believes that their children are safe and well cared for. During this inspection, I found pupils to be polite and well behaved, both in lessons and at social times.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Immediately following your appointment as headteacher, you conducted a thorough review of safeguarding arrangements and acted quickly to address some gaps. You have ensured that your safeguarding policy has been reviewed, is up to date and is well understood by all adults who work in the school. A good range of safeguarding training has been provided for the staff. Vetting checks on adults are thorough. There are prominent displays around the school reminding staff and pupils of the importance of safeguarding. You meet with your staff every week to share information about the actions you are taking to protect your more vulnerable pupils. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

You keep comprehensive records of the actions you take to protect children. These records show that you work closely with other agencies, including social care and the police, and that you engage parents and carers in effective partnerships. You told me that the support you get from the local authority is now better and more responsive.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and are confident adults would act quickly to address any concerns they have. They welcome the workshops the school provides on different aspects of personal safety, including how to stay safe when online.

## **Inspection findings**

- Since your appointment as headteacher, you have brought considerable energy and enthusiasm to the role, leading by example and boldly tackling some aspects of the school that needed modernising. For example, the work you have done to create an early years unit, although ongoing, shows considerable promise, and the new rigour you have brought to assessment means that you and the staff now have a more accurate picture of how well pupils are achieving.
- On this inspection, I looked closely at the progress of pupils currently in the school, to see whether the apparent improvements in outcomes in recent years were being sustained. You told me that assessments for the end of the Reception Year had been inaccurate in the past, which had meant that published progress rates gave a false picture. You have now established more reliable assessment methods, and your most recent assessment information shows that most pupils are making the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils expected to attain the higher standards is also rising. Children enter the school with varying skills. Some children enter with weaknesses in speech and language, and some lack confidence and independence. Others enter with skills typical for their age. This year, you expect standards at the end of the early years to be close to last year's national average. You also expect standards to be in line with those seen nationally at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 this year. However, some disadvantaged pupils and some pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making slower progress. These pupils are receiving extra help to catch up and are engaging well in their lessons with the deputy headteacher.

- I also wanted to check pupils' progress across the wider curriculum. Evidence in pupils' books and from discussions with pupils shows that teachers are not providing a sufficiently broad and balanced curriculum. The quality of learning in some subjects is too shallow and does not prepare them well enough for secondary school. Although you have begun to encourage teachers to be more creative and to integrate wider subject knowledge into topics, this is yet to make a meaningful difference.
- During the inspection, I asked you to identify what you see as the most pressing priorities for the school. At the top of your list was attendance. This is because the overall level of attendance has declined this year and the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly is approaching twice the national average for primary schools. In part, this is because some pupils have missed school through medical issues, but it is noticeable that groups of pupils who are making weaker progress, such as the disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are absent more than other pupils. There are some possible 'green shoots', however, as the level of absence in the spring term was marginally lower than that seen in the autumn, indicating that the strategies you are using may be starting to work.
- The governing body has stepped up its work in monitoring the work of the school. Governors have a planned programme of visits and are highly visible around the school. You provide them with good information through your termly reports. Although this has helped to ensure that governors have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they do not always have the evidence to back up their assertions that the school is performing well. This is because their monitoring activities are not always linked tightly enough to the priorities in the school improvement plan, and the lack of milestones in the plan means that there is no clear timescale for evaluation.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the next school improvement plan focuses on the most pressing priorities and sets out a clear timescale across the year for leaders' and governors' monitoring and evaluation activities
- steps are taken to broaden the curriculum, so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills to be successful across a broad range of subjects
- lessons are appropriately challenging, especially for the most able pupils, so that the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics improves to at least match that seen nationally
- the quality and consistency of teaching improve
- the rising trend in overall absences rates is reversed, and the number of pupils who miss school regularly is quickly reduced.

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

Chris Smith

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, a representative of the local authority and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils and listened to some of them read. Together, we visited lessons in each phase of the school, including the early years unit. During lesson visits, I sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' work with you and the deputy headteacher, to evaluate the progress that pupils had made over time. I also walked around the school to meet pupils informally and observed their behaviour and conduct. I met with a group of parents and looked at the 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 11 responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, national curriculum test results and other information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, the breadth of the curriculum and the quality of leadership and management. I also looked closely at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.