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Mrs Wendy Edwards
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Pelton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2019, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. As executive headteacher, you have balanced effectively the demands of leading two local primary schools. Together with your senior leaders and governors, you have ensured that the quality of provision at Pelton Community Primary School continues to improve.

Pupils are happy and well cared for. The open and honest culture within the school and beyond fosters extremely positive relationships between pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Consequently, staff are well informed about pupils' feelings, anxieties or successes outside school. In this way, staff work together to ensure that pupils receive immediate intervention or reassurance when required.

Pupils' diverse needs are supported in many different ways. For example, you use additional grant funding effectively to ensure that pupils who need a breakfast in the morning can have one during their 'magic breakfast' time. This has contributed to pupils' improved attendance and punctuality. Furthermore, some staff are trained to counsel pupils, and others develop pupils' speech and language during one-to-one sessions. One parent spoke for many who made their views known, saying: 'My children love coming to school, love their teachers and love what they learn. They are making great progress and I'm so pleased to see them thriving here.'

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics. Between 2016 and 2018, pupils' progress in mathematics

across key stage 2 improved substantially. Pupils made progress in 2018 that was well above the national average. Furthermore, pupils' attainment in the mathematics assessments at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has increased year on year.

You were also asked to improve the quality of teaching further. Typically now, the teachers' subject knowledge is of a high standard. Their questioning of pupils supports their assessment well, probes pupils' understanding further and ensures that lessons are well matched to pupils' starting points, offering pupils an appropriate amount of support and challenge. Over time, improved teaching has led to pupils making considerably more progress in their writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are clear about procedures where they are concerned about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. Those with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that referrals to external agencies are swift and monitored, so pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the potential risks that pupils may face, both locally and further afield. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and how to identify potential risks. In discussion, pupils told me how they valued lessons relating to internet safety. Pupils have a thorough understanding about the dangers of disclosing personal information online and whom to speak to 'if something does not feel right'.

Inspection findings

- Between 2016 and 2018, pupils' outcomes in reading at the end of key stage 2 were less strong than those in mathematics and writing. Reading outcomes are still not where they should be. More recently, strategies introduced, such as making reading skills explicit in the curriculum, strong links with the local library, and teachers assessing and listening to pupils' reading more often, are improving reading skills. Teachers consistently reinforce 'vipers' skills: pupils learn how to identify specific **v**ocabulary, **i**nfer, **p**redict, **e**xplain, **r**etrieve or **s**equences.
- During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils were observed using their inference skills well to describe, in their own opinion, how and why the author John Boyne portrayed the Jews and the Nazis in the book, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'. Pupils enjoy this approach to reading because, as one pupil said, 'It's like learning two subjects in one go, history and literacy.' However, there are inconsistencies in the approach to help pupils catch up when they fall behind in their reading, and pupils learn reading skills randomly. Consequently, when reading, pupils cannot always draw upon appropriate skills that help them to blend and segment words or become fluent readers.
- Children get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception. Early years leaders and staff waste no time when introducing reading skills. Following a brief settling-in

period, staff help children identify different sounds, such as those made by an aeroplane or drum. Children are encouraged to turn a page by flicking through family photo albums or to 'read' quietly in the 'book nook'. Staff build children's curiosity by creating exciting opportunities to learn new rhymes or identify letters and sounds. Staff nurture children's early reading skills during discrete, daily activities that introduce simple phonics knowledge and skills. Owing to very effective teaching, most children leave Reception having reached a good level of development.

- Pupils spoken with made it clear how much they enjoy reading. Reading records demonstrate that pupils read widely and often. The pupils can describe their favourite genre of book and/or articulate why they have an interest in an author. Pupils read with passion, enunciate words accurately and pay careful attention to punctuation. The key stage 1 library contains books from a variety of reading schemes, providing pupils with a choice of book that interests them. Teachers guide pupils to choose from a particular book band. However, pupils' current reading books are not always well matched to their current phonics knowledge. Some pupils are unable to decode words or blend sounds together successfully. When this occurs, pupils seek alternative ways to guess words or miss them out entirely. In this way, pupils sometimes progress to the next reading stage before mastering the phonics skills to be able to read their new books effectively.
- Over time, pupils' attendance has been below the national average. Although improving marginally, the proportion of pupils who do not attend regularly is above average. A substantial minority of pupils negatively influence the school's attendance figures and, more importantly, their own education. Leaders are clear that the pupils who attend less tend to make weaker progress than their peers. Leaders have appointed an attendance officer to tackle this issue. They have introduced breakfast clubs, undertaken attendance management workshops, presented regular rewards and raised the profile of attendance with families and pupils, through regular reminders in school newsletters. These steps are beginning to improve pupils' attendance, but disadvantaged pupils continue to attend less often than their peers and others nationally.
- Subject leadership is much improved. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject and how they will improve pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding further. Leaders talked to me with animation about the effect of their recent work on pupils' learning. For example, leaders described the 'achievement for all' strategy, whereby disadvantaged pupils receive additional intervention and support should they fall behind. As a result of this, the progress made by pupils additionally funded through the pupil premium is in line with that of their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the books pupils are asked to read, both in school and at home, are closely matched to their phonic knowledge
- all teaching staff use the same and accurate approach to teaching early reading

skills through phonics, particularly when helping pupils to catch up

- they continue to work closely with families and pupils to improve attendance, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged.

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

Lee Elliott
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 accompanied senior leaders during observations in classrooms and together we evaluated pupils' learning, with a specific focus on reading. I listened to a group of pupils read and spoke to governors, a representative from the local authority, teachers, pupils and parents.

I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. This included the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, in addition to attendance records. I reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations.

I took into account the 25 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 29 responses to the Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 11 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.