

12 March 2018

Mr Adam Cooper
Headteacher
Abingdon Primary School
Abingdon Road
Middlesbrough
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Dear Mr Cooper

Short inspection of Abingdon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018 with Darren Stewart, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have made the transition from deputy headteacher to headteacher seamlessly. This is because of the investment in succession planning by the governing body and the substantial support from the outgoing headteacher. Your detailed knowledge of the complex and continuously changing needs of the school along with your ambition for the future have enabled you to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Your commitment to the pupils and families for whom you cater shines through all that you do and is reflected successfully in your school's ethos of 'believe in achieving.' The importance you attach to investing in pupils' pastoral needs and into developing pupils' emotional well-being is evident in the high-quality values you foster. Developing the whole child and being responsive to pupils' wider needs is central to your continued success and is ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps and life in modern Britain.

You manage high levels of pupil mobility well, particularly in respect of the significant number who arrive at the school at times other than those expected. Their families are recently arrived to the community and often to the country. This has increased the size of the school considerably since it was last inspected. To manage this flux, you have developed a thorough induction process for pupils and their families. You give generously of your time to meet with all new arrivals to

welcome them into your school. You use this valuable time to gather important information and to design a bespoke induction package that supports pupils effectively and sensitively as they settle into their new community. This exemplifies the nurturing ethos of the school. All pupils receive an induction gift of a book bag and equipment to support them on their journey for school readiness. Such levels of support continue throughout their time in school, so that pupils become successful learners.

Senior leaders ably support you in your work. Together, you know your school well and identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses of your school's effectiveness and you show no complacency. You have secured accurate assessment procedures, which better inform you of those pupils in need of additional help with their learning. A comprehensive programme of interventions is in place to support pupils in their learning, which is monitored regularly. Since your appointment you have widened your senior leadership team and include them in your termly pupil progress meetings and reviews of assessment information. This gives you all a greater understanding of the effect of your provision and each pupil's holistic needs. While this generates rich intelligence, you acknowledge that you could use it more effectively. By setting milestones for improvement, linked precisely with gains in pupils' outcomes, you know you can more sharply and accurately evaluate the effect of your actions. We agreed this is an area of your work you need to improve.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection, which included extending opportunities to share good practice. All staff new to the school receive a thorough induction programme supported by a member of the senior leadership team. This ensures that they develop their skills effectively and become familiar with the bespoke context of the school and wider community. This has ensured that the quality of teaching has remained good. You were also asked to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. You have done so successfully and pupils now have increased opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils were able to explain how they understood the terms perpendicular and parallel from learning road safety skills.

At Abingdon Primary, no child is left behind and as a consequence pupils are confident and cooperative members of the school. They value the very many and varied experiences you provide them with that enrich their learning experiences. As a result, pupils say they are happy in school, enjoy their learning and behave well. Pupils show great respect for one another and are respectful of adults, because of the strong community values you convey. Tolerance, equality, resilience, and respect form the bedrock of your school values and underpin your vision for the school and the wider community you serve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You know your school well and are acutely aware of the risks faced by some of your most vulnerable pupils, including within the wider community surrounding the school. Because of this, you have clear systems in place, which are fit for purpose,

to deal swiftly with any child protection concerns or safeguarding issues that come to your attention. A strong focus on proactive support complements the strong reactive procedures you have in place. You work closely with external support agencies, such as the police and the local authority safeguarding teams to provide support for pupils and parents and carers on a wide range of issues including: bereavement, radicalisation and mental health. This makes Abingdon Primary a haven of safety and protection for some of your most vulnerable pupils.

Regular training and updates ensure that all staff and governors are keenly aware of their responsibility for keeping pupils safe. You undertake detailed checks on individuals who work, or volunteer, at the school, to ensure they are fit to work with children.

Pupils, younger and older, demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly on the internet. Bilingual filters ensure that the internet is a safe place to study. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of bullying and its many forms. They expressed confidence that should bullying happen, there is a trusted adult in whom they can confide and who would deal with any concerns swiftly and sensitively.

Inspection findings

- One of our foci for the inspection was to consider leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and for pupils who speak English as an additional language. We found that you have a raft of procedures in place, which are differentiated according to your level of concern and the extent of pupils' absence. You don't shy away from making difficult decisions and use all powers at your disposal to hold parents to account for their children's attendance at school. At the same time, you recognise your responsibility to educate those parents, recently arrived in the country, as to your expectations for good school attendance. As a result, although improvements are slow, you are beginning to overcome some of the barriers faced by families to enable pupils to attend school regularly.
- We also wanted to focus on the actions you were taking to improve reading outcomes. Pupils' progress in reading, by the end of Year 6, has declined, from a strength noted at the time of the last inspection. This was something you had already identified as an improvement priority. Among several of your actions, most notable has been the changes you have made to your guided reading sessions. All year groups now have a dedicated whole-class teaching session, where the skills of reading comprehension are taught explicitly. Teachers engage and stimulate pupils by choosing quality texts to study. For example, pupils in Year 3 were enthralled with the oompa loompas from Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the chocolate factory'. Teachers share pupils' enthusiasm for learning and this is evident in the improvements seen in assessment information for pupils, including that of the disadvantaged pupils, currently in the school. While this is heartening, we agreed that there is a need to gain greater consistency in teachers' skills to challenge pupils to thoroughly unpick the techniques and the content of a text to

deepen their learning.

- As part of our focus on reading, we wanted to determine how effectively children's early reading skills are developed within the early years unit. Books are prominently displayed in Nursery and Reception classes and are chosen carefully to link with the topic being studied. Familiar stories are shared during home visits to act as a comfort for children settling into school. While the very youngest children have lots of songs and stories shared with them, we agreed there is more to do, across Nursery 2 and Reception class, to use books and printed texts more consistently, to extend children's thinking and develop their early reading skills.
- We also reviewed the teaching of phonics in the school. Although outcomes in 2017 improved, to above the national average, over time there has been some variability. There is a daily phonics session for pupils in Year 1, who are taught in groups, according to their ability. Pupils in Year 2 receive a spelling session, with catch-up for those pupils yet to reach the screening check standard. However, different elements from different phonics schemes have crept into teachers' practice. This means that there is a lack of consistency in teaching approaches. We agreed that this variability in practice needs to be reviewed. We also discussed the importance of ensuring that teaching assistants receive appropriate training to improve their contribution to the quality of teaching of phonics.
- Our last focus was the recently added provision for two-year-olds. This is a new aspect of your provision since the last inspection. Although only open since January 2017, it is already improving children's attainment on entry into Nursery 2 class. It is envisaged this will improve further, as children receive a full academic year within the setting. Children are very settled and confident in the setting. This is because of the strong relationships that children quickly form with their key workers. Well-established routines ensure that children develop their independence skills successfully. Children were observed to put on their coats and wellies, with limited support, so they were ready to enjoy outdoor play in the snow. All welfare arrangements are secure and children thrive as a result of the stimulating environment and rich activities that are available for them to explore.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is greater consistency to the school's approach to the teaching of phonics, including the contribution of teaching assistants
- children's access to printed text in the early years is extended to maximise opportunities to develop their early reading skills
- the rich assessment information held by leaders is used more effectively to sharpen improvement plans, so they can be evaluated more precisely.

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

Diane Buckle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors made visits to all classes with you and the deputy headteacher and looked at the work in pupils' books. Inspectors met with the co-chairs of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. Inspectors met with the English subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator. The inspectors talked to pupils and heard them read during their learning and more formally at lunchtime.

The inspectors took account of three free-text responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 182 responses to the school's own parental consultation taken earlier this term.

We examined a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, and assessment information for pupils currently in the school, attendance and behaviour logs and safeguarding records.