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Mrs Emma Watson
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Dear Mrs Watson

Short inspection of The Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team share a strong sense of purpose in your commitment to achieve the very best for all of your pupils. You underpin this with an ethos of high expectations of everyone in school and have set clear non-negotiables about the standard of teaching and learning that all pupils will receive. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school which is fully supported by governors and parents. Staff recognise and are fully supportive of your desire to provide the best educational experience possible for pupils in The Avenue Primary School.

You have decisively addressed areas for improvement within school, including those from the previous inspection. For example, the implementation of a topic-based curriculum is providing pupils with challenging experiences to stimulate learning and in turn further develop their writing. You have strengthened the leadership of the whole school by building an increasingly strong team across different subjects and phases. These leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and share good practice to continue to drive further improvements in teaching. However, you recognise that there is further work to be done with staff new to positions of responsibility to develop their skills of leadership and management. Effective teaching, rigorous systems of monitoring and evaluation and high expectations of all ensure that pupils make good progress throughout their time in your school.

You, your leaders and governors know the school well. Teaching and learning are kept continually under the spotlight through focused monitoring and evaluation. When faced with teaching that has not been at the standard required, you and your governors have taken decisive and immediate action. Clear action plans are focused on addressing the increasing demands of the national curriculum and associated assessment tasks. As a result, at key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2017, initial information shows that pupils achieved outcomes that were above those seen in provisional national data. You have recognised that the proportion of higher attaining pupils working at greater depth needs to increase and action is already under way to address this. However, further work is required to ensure that this group of pupils makes even better progress so that a higher proportion reaches greater depth.

Children in early years are making strong progress and the proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is above the national average. Children are surrounded, both in the classroom and in the outside space, by numerous opportunities to extend their spoken and written language. For example, pen portraits created by each child are hung on a 'washing line' and show how their pencil skills are developing from early mark-making to words and simple sentences. Children are confident in talking to visitors about their learning and share their excitement around new experiences.

You have an experienced and fully committed team of governors who are passionate about the school. Governors have a wide range of skills which they use effectively to hold leaders to account for key aspects of the school's performance. They have an accurate view of the good quality of teaching and learning within school and have invested time and funding into developing teachers' skills. All governors are mindful of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive appropriate training. Governors are an intrinsic part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the school and in turn are very reflective on their own practice. As the chair of governors said: 'Each meeting we ask ourselves – have we made an impact?'

Pupils' progress is regularly and systematically tracked and reviewed and summaries of progress are shared by you with the governing body. Regular moderation within school and with external partners confirms the accuracy of the school's tracking information. Recently, two members of staff received accreditation as local authority moderators and this additional expertise is being put to good use within school. Leaders and teachers know their pupils and are fully accountable for pupils' progress across the year. Progress meetings identify key areas for improvement for each pupil and this informs targeted high-quality teaching in the classroom and additional support from teaching assistants. Pupils who need further support to address gaps in their learning are given increased teaching time with teachers in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Any action that is taken to support pupils' learning is constantly monitored to ensure the right impact on outcomes.

Your team's commitment to pupils' academic development is matched in their commitment to pupils' social and emotional well-being. Pupils have pride in their school, which they see as a calm and nurturing environment for them to work in.

They talk positively about how school is helping them to develop high aspirations for their future. You and your teachers clearly model positive learning behaviour and provide supportive but equally challenging feedback as to how pupils can improve. All pupils spoken to during the inspection appreciate what The Avenue Primary School provides for them and see that coming to school will enable them to progress and help them to achieve a good career. Pupils behave in a very positive way and show great care and concern for each other. For example, a Year 6 pupil who was feeling a little 'sad' at breaktime was ably supported and cared for by one of the prefects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team maintain a rigorous and constant focus upon the welfare of pupils at all times. The school's safeguarding processes are of a high quality and reflect a culture where actions to promote pupils' safety and welfare permeate all aspects of the school's work. Parents recognise that the school not only develops pupils academically but also physically and emotionally. Thorough checks are carried out on all staff working within school and visitors are carefully monitored and given clear guidance as to what is acceptable when in school. All vulnerable pupils are closely monitored and you and your team focus on early identification of concerns before they can reach a crisis point. Close links are maintained with external agencies to support pupils' welfare. Any concerns are followed up quickly and records are carefully kept.

Pupils feel safe and well supported in school and their parents agree. Pupils of all ages speak confidently about being able to approach any adult within school if they have any concerns or worries. They feel that action would be taken quickly and problems sorted out appropriately. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online both within school and at home. Your school's focus on providing a safe and caring community in an orderly environment supports pupils in feeling secure.

Inspection findings

- Pupils are enthusiastic writers who combine the ability to write in a range of formats, genres and purposes with accuracy in their use of sentences and punctuation. Through the introduction of a curriculum book for all subjects except mathematics, writing opportunities are brought together. This provides a clear picture of the range of writing opportunities that pupils are experiencing across the curriculum and the level of challenge within year groups and key stages. In these books, pupils display a pride in their achievements and the standard of presentation is extremely high.
- Teachers focus on ensuring that pupils have something exciting to write about and they provide many interesting and imaginative hooks into writing. For example, in the Year 6 topic called 'Blood Heart', pupils had the opportunity to dissect a lamb's heart and then produce an informative and creative online presentation around what they had discovered. Throughout the school, writing is celebrated and

shared. Displays of pupils' work focus on the different stages of development in the writing process rather than solely on an end product.

- Continuous monitoring by leaders and teachers quickly identifies whether pupils are not achieving the challenging targets set for them in writing. If this happens, pupils quickly receive targeted support through focused teaching in the classroom. Those staff new to leadership are beginning to take more strategic responsibility within school, which is impacting on the quality of teaching, but you recognise that this is not yet fully embedded. High-quality feedback helps pupils to see clearly what they need to do to make further progress. The school has introduced success criteria that are individually tailored to each pupil's needs and are used by pupils to evaluate their work. Because of the school's actions, outcomes were good for pupils across key stage 2 and most year groups in key stage 1 in 2017. Evidence in pupils' books for this year shows a continued high standard of work.
- Every teacher has a profile of the needs of each disadvantaged pupil in their class and of the specific strategies that will help them to improve. Careful planning is put into place that details how pupils will be supported. Targets are set and then the impact of the teacher's actions is evaluated. Additional funding in school is used to provide pupils with additional classroom time to support their needs. Because of this and ongoing monitoring by all leaders, disadvantaged pupils made good progress across each year group in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017.
- The school has many strategies to encourage and celebrate pupils' regular and punctual attendance. These include a range of class and individual rewards and prizes, as well as support from agencies outside school when necessary. The school works hard with families and pupils to make sure that everyone sees the value of attending school regularly. Discussions with pupils clearly show that they are realising the impact that absence can have on their learning.
- Leaders are continuing to increase the level of challenge in every subject area and ensuring that work is set at the right level for all pupils, including those with higher abilities. Work in books shows that these pupils are being challenged through the use of high-quality texts, the types of writing they are being asked to produce, the feedback as to how to improve their work and overall through the high expectations of their teachers. In discussion with pupils, all feel that they are appropriately challenged and understand the need to achieve the best possible outcomes. Target sheets for every class clearly show what aspects of each subject are key to helping groups to make further progress and these are shared with all pupils. However, in some subjects, for example mathematics, when pupils have shown that they are secure in their understanding, they are still given further tasks to work through at the same level. Teachers are not always confident in their knowledge that pupils are ready to move on and allow them to do so. While increasing numbers of pupils achieve good outcomes, not enough pupils are working at greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- emerging leaders are further developed, enabling them to take on greater responsibilities across all aspects of the school to build the school's leadership capacity
- learning opportunities are further developed and embedded in all lessons to ensure that higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged.

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

Anne Vernon

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your middle leadership team. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils in lessons and at breaktimes. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I undertook lesson observations with you. I also looked at pupils' work in books from the current academic year and also from 2016/17. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including action plans, assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking data. I examined safeguarding documents, including the record of security and suitability checks on staff. I also listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I also took into account the 37 free-text responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.