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Mrs J Millington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Millington

Short inspection of Kerr Mackie Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 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 2012.

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.**

You were appointed to the school in September 2016 following the departure of the previous headteacher. A new chair of the governing body was also appointed at the same time. You have evaluated all aspects of the school's work and have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school. You have acted quickly to develop a plan to tackle the slow progress in key stage 2 and historical low standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 and 2016. You have quickly set a wide range of activities in place, and results improved in 2017 for Year 6 pupils and especially for those with high prior attainment at key stage 1. However, the work has yet to embed fully, and consistently, across the school to ensure that all groups of pupils make strong progress.

Strategic changes to the organisation of the school's work are beginning to strengthen leadership across the school. You have ensured that all staff are aware of their new roles and the expectations that you have of them. However, subject leaders are not using the information from their checks on learning sharply enough to inform their improvement plans. The newly created inclusion team have successfully reduced rates of persistent absence. Attendance rates across the school also improved in 2017 to be close to the national average.

Staff have responded willingly to the programme of professional development you

have introduced and the opportunities to learn from the work of colleagues in other schools. Many teachers appreciate the work that has taken place. They feel encouraged, challenged and well supported to update and develop the quality of teaching. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do in reading, writing and mathematics have increased.

Recent approaches to improving assessment are still in their early stages. You are very clear about the challenges ahead and are determined to sustain and improve standards to enable all pupils to achieve their potential. With the acting deputy headteacher, you introduced more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching. You have used information gathered through these checks effectively to focus additional support on staff and pupils. Progress meetings, in which teachers discuss their pupils' work and are required to justify the judgements they have made, are providing more security to assessment.

You have established good communication with parents and carers. A parent explained, 'The headteacher was open and honest about the issue, communicated her action plan to raise standards, and is providing feedback on progress.' It is clear from the response to the inspection survey that parents value and strongly support the school, especially your leadership and the work of staff. Parents generally are of the view, 'It's a much better school in all respects.' Parents are starting to see the difference and reported significant positive changes and improvement in their children's learning and development in the last year, for example 'My child now reads at home, is doing lots of writing (voluntarily), and even enjoys mathematics.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. They ensure that arrangements are up to date and have strengthened them further following an external review by the local authority. Staff have a good understanding of procedures and risks. They are alert and listen to children. They act quickly to refer concerns to the designated safeguarding lead, who in turn is equally swift in ensuring that vulnerable children receive the help and support they need.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and have an adult they can talk to if something is worrying them. Bullying is rare and any incident is quickly followed up and resolved by staff. Pupils are proud that their school adopts a firm approach to anti-bullying and treating each other and adults with respect. Younger pupils say that keeping the gates closed and the supervision of an adult at playtime and as they leave school help them to feel safe and secure. Parents agreed that their children are safe at school and well looked after. The school's support and care for children is highly valued by many parents. A parent said, 'It has helped my child to feel at ease about learning and to flourish.'

Inspection findings

- Work scrutiny in mathematics and writing shows that teachers are planning work that is age-appropriate. Pupils are responding and have very good attitudes to learning. They are ready to learn, attentive and demonstrate resilience by persevering with work in lessons. Pupils are keen readers and are willing to push themselves. Year 6 pupils explained how they were 'always up for a challenge'. They like 'complicated' books and enjoy and are expected to work out the subtleties to the plot and anticipate twists and turns.
- The work scrutiny undertaken during this inspection and the school's latest tracking information show that although teaching is improving, it remains variable in its impact on pupils' progress and attainment in writing and mathematics. This is especially so between the classes in some year groups and for disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils are making slow progress in securing basic skills in grammar. Targets and reviews are not always specific enough to identify the progress that some pupils are making, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- In discussions, leaders of mathematics and English clearly identify the aspects of their subjects that need to improve. However, subject leaders are not using the insights from their checks on learning to inform improvement plans.
- The chair of the governing body is leading developments to governance. Governors have a better understanding of their roles following an external review of their effectiveness, and an influx of new members and training. Consequently, they are becoming skilled in holding leaders to account. They are starting to find out more about the school and they use their visits to check that the action plan is being implemented.
- Governors are keeping a check on additional funding and how it is spent. However, they are less clear about the difference it is making to pupils' achievement. This hinders them in evaluating and making informed decisions about the value for money of these additional funds.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain and embed improvement by ensuring that:

- staff identify the barriers to learning in the areas they are responsible for and use this information to sharply identify the actions needed in improvement plans
- inconsistencies in teaching and gaps in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are eliminated
- governors know and can demonstrate the difference that additional funding is making to improve the learning and progress for disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the sports skills and fitness of all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The school met the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014–2016. During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and pupils. I also met with the chair of the governing body and four governors. You and I jointly observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' books and talked with them about their work. I also undertook a scrutiny of work in mathematics and English with the leaders of these subjects. I read school leadership documents, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans. I reviewed your safeguarding procedures and looked at the single central record. I considered the 68 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 37 text responses, an email and three additional responses from parents. I reviewed the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire and 109 responses to the pupil questionnaire.