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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Callum Kidd
Headteacher
Carr Hill Community Primary School
Carr Hill Road
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 5NB

Dear Mr Kidd

Short inspection of Carr Hill Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 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 and the staff at Carr Hill Community Primary School are passionate about meeting the needs of pupils. The leadership team's focus on preparing pupils for the next stage of their education has resulted in significant improvements in the achievement of pupils in reading and mathematics by the time they leave the school. In 2017, the standards attained by Year 6 pupils in these subject areas were above the national averages. The progress made by these pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in reading and mathematics across key stage 2 was in the top 10% of schools nationally.

You and the governing body have developed a curriculum which enables pupils to develop important skills for life. From the outset in early years, and throughout the school, staff expect that pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well and engage in their learning with gusto. Their personal, social and emotional development is strong. By the time they reach upper key stage 2, most pupils show maturity and have a strong sense of personal responsibility. Your work to improve attendance has been successful and has made sure that pupils rarely miss school. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and are full of praise for the adults who support them.

Governance has strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors have reviewed their skills and reorganised the structure of the governing body to ensure that the right systems are in place to hold leaders to account. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are not afraid to challenge leaders in order to satisfy

themselves that the provision is meeting the needs of the pupils.

You were disappointed with the outcomes achieved in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Since then, leaders have redoubled their efforts to improve the teaching of writing. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' progress is accelerating as a result. Well-considered action by the subject leader has improved the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling significantly so that pupils achieve exceptionally well in these areas.

At the previous inspection, you were tasked with improving the achievement of pupils in the early years and key stage 1. The proportion of children reaching the expected standard by the end of the Reception Year has increased. More pupils are now reaching the expected standard for their age in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Across key stage 1, the proportion of pupils working at the higher standard has risen. However, you recognise that the standards attained by pupils in the early years and key stage 1 remain below the national average. You acknowledge that there is more to do so that pupils with lower starting points make more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in order to catch up quickly to the expected standard for their age.

You know that the proportion of boys attaining the expected standards for their age is variable across the school. Leaders have begun to address this, but appreciate that this work needs to be developed further so that boys attain as well as they can. Leaders are aware of the need to refine the system for tracking the achievement of groups of pupils so that they, including the governing body, have a better view of the progress made by boys across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective. Staff receive the training they need and this is regularly refreshed through updates from leaders. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Safeguarding records are detailed. They demonstrate leaders' effective engagement with other agencies when pupils are at risk of harm.

Pupils report, and the school's records reflect, that bullying is rare. Where incidents do occur, pupils indicate overwhelming confidence in the actions of staff to follow up issues. Leaders' work to embed a culture of tolerance and respect has been successful. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection were thoughtful and reflective about the part they play in this. For example, they could explain, with maturity, the impact that homophobic language can have on individuals and were clear that it had no place in their school.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have steadily improved the teaching of mathematics. Following an analysis of the outcomes achieved by pupils in 2016, the subject leader correctly identified a need to develop pupils' ability to reason mathematically. As a result of training for staff and a new curriculum for

mathematics, pupils, particularly in key stage 2, now have more opportunities to tackle tricky problems. Staff routinely expect pupils to explain their mathematical reasoning. Pupils' workbooks show that by the end of key stage 2, standards in mathematics are above the national average. This represents strong progress from pupils' starting points.

- The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 6 in reading have significantly increased over time and are above the national average. Workbooks show that well-planned opportunities for pupils to explore different texts are developing their skills of inference and deduction effectively. For example, during the autumn term, pupils in Year 6 responded with exceptional maturity to Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et decorum est', showing remarkable insight into the experiences of soldiers in the trenches during the First World War.
- As a result of training and coaching for staff, teaching is now ensuring that pupils rapidly develop the important skills they need in grammar, punctuation and spelling. At the end of Year 6 in 2017, almost all pupils reached the expected standard for their age. However, the outcomes achieved by pupils in writing were below the national average, particularly at the higher standard. This was an area I was keen to review during this inspection. Leaders have coordinated training for staff and opportunities for teachers to visit other schools to explore approaches to the assessment of writing. Pupils' workbooks demonstrate that they have regular opportunities to write for different purposes and to draft and redraft their work. Pupils' progress is improving strongly. By the end of key stage 2, an increasing proportion of pupils are confident, fluent writers.
- Following the previous inspection, you took action to strengthen the quality of adult-led teaching opportunities in the early years. The impact of this work was evident during the inspection. For example, in the Reception Year adults worked effectively with groups of children to develop their understanding of number sentences and addition. A number of children who join the school need support in order to develop the personal, social and emotional skills that are vital to enable them to learn well. Staff prioritise this aspect of children's development. The effect of this was apparent in the Nursery Class. Just a few weeks after their admission, children were cooperating with adults, playing well together and sustaining their concentration on the activities they had chosen. You agreed, however, that there is more work to do to make sure that the activities that children access independently build on what they can already do in reading, writing and mathematics. This is particularly the case in the Reception Year, where more children with lower prior attainment need to make faster progress to catch up quickly to the expected standard for their age.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the standards attained by pupils at the end of key stage 1 were significantly below the national average. Your work to improve the quality of teaching has enabled more pupils to make stronger progress. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 2 increased in 2017. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard still remains below the national average. You recognise that, at times, teachers are not ambitious enough for the progress that pupils make. Occasionally, tasks are too simple or do not require pupils to think deeply about their learning. You acknowledge that teaching needs to be more

consistent in securing more rapid progress from pupils in reading, writing and mathematics so that a higher proportion of pupils with low prior attainment catch up to the expected standard for their age by the end of key stage 1.

- Your accurate self-evaluation enabled you and the deputy headteacher to identify that boys are attaining less well across the school. You have begun to address this. While boys' attainment has increased recently in some classes in the school, you know that this remains inconsistent. You are carefully tracking the progress of each individual pupil. However, you have realised that your current approach does not give you a strategic view of the progress that boys with low prior attainment are making across the school. This limits the ability of leaders, including governors, to judge the effectiveness of your work to address this priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enables a higher proportion of pupils with low prior attainment in the early years and key stage 1 to make more rapid progress in order to catch up quickly to the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics
- boys' progress accelerates so that a higher proportion reach the expected standards for their age
- the school's approach to tracking pupils' achievement is refined so that leaders have a clearer picture of the progress made by those pupils who have yet to reach the expected standard for their age.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gateshead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown
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 met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you and the deputy headteacher. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I listened to some pupils from Year 2 reading. I reviewed examples of pupils' work. You presented information detailing pupils' achievement, your self-evaluation document

and the school development plan. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils were checked. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.