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Mr Andrew Bainbridge
Bernard Gilpin Primary School
Hall Lane
Houghton le Spring
DH5 8AD

Dear Mr Bainbridge

Short inspection of Bernard Gilpin Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2015, 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school continues to improve.

You and your staff have created a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. Together you have built on positive relationships between staff and pupils that are characterised by mutual respect. Teachers work hard to provide an innovative, stimulating and action-packed curriculum with a strong focus on real life experience, including a host of educational visits for every pupil. As a consequence, pupils are proud of their school, concentrate well in lessons and are enthusiastic about their learning. They behave well and settle quickly to work. At playtimes they are sociable and play well together. Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, it is dealt with quickly by staff.

Parents have a positive view of the school and have high regard for the education their child receives. Documentation reviewed during the inspection confirms that the vast majority of parents find the school a welcoming and caring place to send their children. They feel well informed about the progress their children have made and that any issues they raise are dealt with effectively.

Pupils, whatever their starting points, make at least expected progress and many make better than expected progress. Those who need to catch up do so quickly. This is due to you and your staff regularly reviewing how well pupils are doing and your early intervention to tackle any short-fall in learning.

At the previous inspection, as a result of your highly effective leadership, inspectors noted the rapidly improving teaching and accelerated progress of pupils. In addition, they noted that pupil's behaviour and attitude to learning was good. These strengths have been maintained. In addition, progress has been made towards addressing improvements identified at the last inspection. For example, the progress and standards reached in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 now matches that seen in reading and mathematics. In Key Stage 1 the outcomes for writing have improved but still do not match that seen for reading and mathematics, especially at higher levels.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders are determined in your efforts to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding practice is secure. Frequent training keeps staff well aware of different risks to pupils' safety and well-being. Senior leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. The determination of you and your leaders is exemplified by your successful efforts to track down children missing from education and ensure they are safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and how to deal with cyber bullying. Pupils are aware of, but less secure about, different forms of bullying such as homophobic bullying. There is limited useful information on the school website to help parents understand the school's work around safeguarding and some important information is not up-to-date.

Inspection findings

- You, your leaders and staff are strongly committed to continuous improvement. The impact of the wider leadership team has improved. Teachers work well together to help improve each other's practice and plan a relevant and exciting learning experience for pupils.
- Pupils make good and better progress across most classes. In Key Stage 2, every child made the progress expected of them. Progress in Key Stage 1 is steady, with some pupils making good progress and catching up quickly where they need to.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils matches and sometimes exceeds that seen elsewhere. However, too few disadvantaged pupils achieve at higher levels by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, the standards pupils reach in reading, writing and especially mathematics mean that they are well prepared to flourish in secondary school.
- Pupils' learning is supported effectively through work that is closely matched to their differing abilities. They receive helpful guidance from teachers on how to improve their work. As a result, they have good understanding of the next steps to further develop their knowledge and skills.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and often find it challenging. They enjoy the lively and active curriculum. Teachers work hard to bring learning to life. The use of a wide range of opportunities to write and apply their

mathematical skills in many different subjects and contexts helps their understanding and reasoning. The improving standard of writing is evident in pupils' work. The presentation and handwriting seen in books is exceptional.

- School leaders at all levels are engaged with monitoring the quality of teaching and the work the pupils are producing. They are increasingly effective in supporting and challenging staff and holding them accountable for the improvements pupils make. Subject leaders have a good knowledge of their subject area, know how well pupils are doing and what needs to be done to improve teaching further.
- Effective monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is focused on identifying as early as possible where gaps in pupils learning may be emerging. This results in additional support being given in a timely manner to individual pupils or groups of pupils to help them catch up. Where performance starts to fall below that seen in the rest of the school, senior leaders identify this and take timely action. For example, in Key Stage 1, staffing levels have been reviewed and support provided to address emerging issues in pupils' progress.
- Governors know the school well and have an accurate view of the overall effectiveness of the provision. They know the priorities for further improvement and hold you and your senior leaders to account by asking timely questions. Their actions and decisions help influence school improvement priorities. Governors understand their own needs for further development. For example, they recognise that they have not secured enough information about what difference additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is making. The information provided to parents on how this funding is spent and what difference it is making is also not clear enough. Governors have commissioned a review to address this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils' understanding and awareness of all forms of bullying matches that of cyber-bullying, and the safeguarding culture of the school is more accurately reflected in documents made accessible to parents
- a planned review of what difference funding for disadvantaged pupils is making is acted on, especially for those pupils that could achieve at higher levels in Key Stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, some senior leaders and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I visited several classrooms with you to observe teaching. I spoke with a range of pupils in lessons and at playtimes and a selected group of pupils about the school. I reviewed information from Parent View and school surveys. I evaluated recent information about progress pupils make across the school and how the accuracy of assessments is established.