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Ms Zoe Westley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Westley

Short inspection of Springwell School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2019 with Tracy Millard, Ofsted 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 outstanding in February 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You and your staff are relentless in your resolve to ensure that you provide the very best quality of education and care for your pupils. You and your staff have an absolute belief and determination that every child should receive the best experience of school possible. Consequently, pupils thrive in this school. They make excellent progress from their often low starting points, both in their academic and personal development.

Under your inspirational leadership, the tremendously high-quality provision and outcomes for pupils have been sustained. The school remains forward-looking, constantly looking for inventive ways to improve education further for pupils, both in your own school and others. This means you are able to share good practice and successfully support pupils in their learning beyond your own school.

Leaders work effectively in partnership with the local authority and other providers to develop the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) both for pupils at Springwell and in other schools in the locality. Leaders know that there is scope to develop these links even further in order to better support improvement of the provision for pupils with SEND in these other schools, as well as to benefit pupils when transferring to and from Springwell School.

The previous inspection noted only one area for improvement, which asked the school to fully implement the new arrangements for assessment so that it impacted fully on the pupils' performance. You have addressed this effectively. The assessment procedures in school are carefully considered and continue to evolve to meet the needs of pupils better.

You understand that the roles and responsibilities of all staff, including the leadership team, need to be reviewed to ensure that the school is able to respond effectively to these changes. Your clear thinking about the curriculum, the work of the leadership team and your innovative approach to staff development have enabled the school to respond promptly and successfully to the needs of pupils. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to go from strength to strength.

Safeguarding is effective.

- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You, your staff and governors consider the safeguarding of pupils to be of the utmost importance. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect every pupil from all potential risks. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates the school.
- Staff receive high-quality training and frequent updates on keeping pupils safe. This means that they are quickly able to spot concerns and take rapid action with confidence.
- Leaders and governors fully understand the importance of recruiting safely. Therefore, all staff are carefully checked prior to starting employment to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- Leaders work closely with a range of other external agencies. They do not hesitate to escalate their concerns when required. They also follow up any concerns thoroughly. This minimises risk to pupils and helps keep them safe.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are impressive. Consequently, pupils report that they are happy and feel safe because they trust the adults in school. Pupils are comfortable in sharing their anxieties with staff and trust them to help them to find solutions. This helps reduce their anxiety and raise self-confidence. Staff in school are developing pupils' ability to negotiate and plan with their peers better without the need to rely on adults to mediate group tasks or social times.
- You have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance. You work with families to support pupils with medical needs and offer timely support to promote attendance. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in the number of pupils persistently absent from school.
- Pupils' behaviour seen during the inspection was exemplary. You have clear expectations of behaviour which are understood by pupils. Pupils describe how they are taught to make the 'right choices'. Policies and procedures are securely in place to ensure that pupils have the support and guidance to behave well. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour where pupils have needed to be restrained.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered. This included considering how leaders come to the view that pupils are making progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. We found that there is no complacency in this school. Staff know and understand pupils' needs exceptionally well. The systems in place ensure that the teaching staff have a very clear understanding of the pupils' understanding and those areas they still need to develop.
- Staff build strong and trusting relationships with the pupils in their care. As a result, the improvements pupils make in their learning is impressive. Pupils describe how they are happy and enjoy their learning.
- Most parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive and greatly appreciate the quality of education and care their children receive. Comments such as 'I cannot thank Springwell enough for their care, time and passion to teach my child. He has come on leaps and bounds because of his placement at this school' are typical of the responses received.
- We also considered whether the outstanding teaching and learning demonstrated at the last inspection continues to have an outstanding impact on pupils' achievement over time. Inspectors found that staff share your total dedication, ambition and drive to provide the very best for each pupil. They benefit from the high-quality training, coaching and mentoring that you and your leaders provide. This means that staff are highly skilled in providing pupils with the education and care that precisely meet their needs.
- You demonstrate a relentless drive for the continuous improvement of this outstanding school and are persistent in your determination to raise pupils' achievements further.
- Skilled governors have established close links with the school. Leaders provide governors with detailed information about the school's performance. Governors are regular visitors to school and support and challenge the headteacher and senior leaders effectively. Governors work closely and effectively with the senior leaders to evaluate the school's work and identify priorities for development.
- The curriculum excites and motivates pupils to learn well. The core skills of reading, writing and mathematics are carefully woven throughout the curriculum. Of equal importance is the personal, social and health education of pupils. This work is securely embedded in all aspects of the school. This builds pupils' resilience and independence and raises their self-worth. Consequently, pupils develop positive attitudes and achieve well.
- The physical education (PE) curriculum, teaching and learning is a particular strength of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic to participate in all aspects of PE. Staff are creative in how they adapt the curriculum to pupils' needs. The school participates in a sports programme linking with 13 primary schools and involving around 140 children in inter-school competitions. This leads to pupils developing a sense of real achievement in their growing skills.

- Leaders monitor the quality of provision carefully and rigorously. You provide staff with high-quality guidance and support to ensure that their teaching meets your exacting standards. Leaders clearly demonstrated that they have a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas which each pupil needs to develop.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the partnership with other local schools is further strengthened, both to support improvement of provision for pupils with SEND in these schools and to benefit pupils when transferring to and from Springwell
- pupils' ability to negotiate and plan with their peers without adult support is further developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Garton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you and other senior leaders. You and other senior leaders accompanied inspectors on short visits to lessons across the school. Inspectors held discussions with different leaders and focused on each of the key lines of enquiry. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and one other governor and a phone-call meeting took place with a representative from the local authority. Meetings were also held with other teaching staff. Inspectors worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and assessment information showing pupils' progress. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and summary improvement plan, an independent audit of the school's work, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. Inspectors took into consideration five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, and also comments made in person to the inspection team by both parents and pupils.