

Report on visit to Easington Lane Primary School

16/17 May 2017

Context

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. There are few pupils from a minority ethnic background or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils in receipt of support for their special educational needs is slightly above average and there are few with education, health and care plans or a statement of special educational needs. The school extends its services to provide a breakfast club and an after-school club. There is an on-site nursery, Little Legs, which is a provision for two-year old children managed by the governing body. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Main Strengths

- Leaders and governors have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and work together very effectively as a team to improve outcomes for pupils. They are not complacent and regularly review how things are developing and take action promptly if they have any concerns.
- There is a very positive ethos within the school and it provides a safe environment for pupils. As a result, pupils rapidly gain confidence, know they are well-cared for and are keen and motivated to learn.
- Outcomes for pupils are improving as leaders take action to address any areas of underachievement.
- Staff in the early years work well as a team and ensure that children are well-prepared for the next class or keystage. They are working hard to make sure that as many children as possible reach a good level of development.
- There are strengths in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers plan carefully to meet the needs and interests of pupils, evaluating what pupils know, can do and understand and addressing any areas of weakness. Pupils spoken to confirm that they always receive the help they need to improve their work and they are relishing opportunities to become more independent in their learning.

Recommendations

- Improve outcomes for pupils, particularly in reading and writing and, in some year groups, reduce the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve spelling and handwriting across the school as well as the proportion of pupils who achieve the phonics screening check in keystage 1.
- Continue to improve outcomes in the early years and try to ensure that children attend regularly so they get a good start to their education and develop positive attitudes to school from an early age.

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring a high level of challenge and asking more incisive and probing questions to enable pupils to think more deeply. In addition, create opportunities for pupils to gain excitement in their learning as well as enabling them to take responsibility and ownership of making improvements.
- Promote pupils' cultural development by widening their experiences of meeting and learning about those from cultures and backgrounds different to their own.
- Improve attendance further to at least the national average and continue to reduce persistent absence.
- Ensure all leaders can succinctly demonstrate the impact of their work on outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes

Children enter the early years with skills and abilities which are below those typical for children of their age. Some children have speech, language and communication difficulties, while others have difficulties in their personal, social and emotional development. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen over time, reaching 65% in 2016, which was closer to the national average than in previous years. Children make at least expected progress from their starting points with a good proportion making better than expected progress. Disadvantaged children made rapid progress in 2016 from their starting points, but only 50% of pupil premium children achieved a good level of development, compared to 73% of their non-pupil premium peers, a larger gap than nationally. However, in the current Reception class the gaps are narrowing and, at the present time, there is no discernible difference. Over time, girls have performed better than boys and few children with special educational needs reach a good level of development. Staff are supporting current children in improving outcomes in reading, writing and moving and handling, in particular.

Results in the Year 1 phonic screening check have remained static over the last three years. Leaders are fully aware of this and are taking steps to ensure a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach the required level this year. In 2016, girls performed better than boys and disadvantaged pupils performed less well than their peers, with all groups below the national average. By the end of Year 2 in 2016, 88% of pupils achieved the required level.

Outcomes at the end of keystage 1 in 2016 showed that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard were broadly in line with national averages. Fewer pupils attained in greater depth in writing and mathematics than in reading. However, this shows good progress for the low proportion who achieved a good

level of development in 2014. There were no notable gender differences, but disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as their peers. Current teacher assessments indicate that more of the current Year 2 pupils are on track to reach expected levels in reading, than in writing and mathematics.

In keystage 2 in 2016, pupils made average progress in reading and writing and well-above average progress in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils performed less well than their peers. In reading, writing and mathematics combined, only 35% of pupils achieved compared to 53% nationally. Attainment was below expected standards in reading, mathematics and spelling, grammar and punctuation, in particular. However, current pupils in Year 6 are making more rapid progress and more are on track to reach and exceed age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Gaps are reducing between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Leaders hold regular pupil progress meetings each half-term where any pupils who may be underachieving are identified. Appropriate interventions are implemented and the impact of these on pupils' achievement is measured. Because of this vigilance, gaps are reducing between disadvantaged pupils and others, particularly in Year 6 and Reception although some gaps currently remain in other year groups.

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations to pupils so they know what they are expected to learn. They also use subject specific vocabulary and they ensure pupils use and understand it. Lessons are planned well, based on evaluations of how well pupils have learned in the previous lesson. Teachers do refer to previous learning so pupils can see what they are to learn in this lesson in context. Resources are well-prepared and easily accessible to pupils.

On most occasions, misconceptions are identified and addressed promptly. Teachers often stop the lesson to explain to pupils how they can improve on their learning or share examples of pupils' work. However, on a very few occasions, misconceptions could have been avoided because the information on the task was not clearly visible or pupils were not paying full attention during the teachers' explanation. Most staff give pupils clear timescales within which to complete their tasks. This helps pupils to keep focused on their work. There are effective opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas. This helps them to consolidate their understanding of concepts. Most staff ask good, open questions and pupils respond well. Pupils are expected to give reasons for their answers. However, on occasions, staff could ask more incisive and probing questions to encourage pupils to think more deeply. Most work is pitched at the right level for pupils' abilities, but occasionally, work could be more challenging to stretch pupils' thinking further.

Information and communication technology is used effectively to support pupils' learning, such as in a Year 6 lesson when pupils were learning to use the Mayan number system and the challenges provided were at different levels. The teaching of mathematics is a strength in the school, which resulted in very positive outcomes in the national assessment tests in Year 6 in 2016. Pupils complete a range of work and there is clear evidence of problem solving and reasoning and developing mastery in mathematics. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum and to write at length. Some good examples of creative writing were seen during the visit. Pupils enjoy writing and are developing their stamina. Pupils are developing their reading skills well, including learning phonic sounds, and staff are taking every opportunity to develop pupils' skills in greater depth, such as understanding inference and deduction.

Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and, along with the teachers, give good support to move pupils on in their learning. Staff encourage pupils to work independently and pupils have good opportunities to assess their own and other's work. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. Pupils' behave well in lessons because staff have high expectations of them. Pupils are keen and motivated to learn. There is a calm, purposeful working atmosphere in all classrooms.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and motivated to learn. They value the help and support given to them by staff. Pupils are taking more pride in their work and trying hard to improve their handwriting and presentation. Pupils are polite and helpful to adults and to one another. They work cooperatively together on tasks and show respect by listening to each other's views. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils spoken to during the visit indicated that there are occasionally incidents which may happen, but that these are addressed effectively by adults. There are many activities for pupils to engage in during lunchtimes and break times which pupils enjoy and which enable them to socialise with their peers. Parents spoken to during the visit indicated that they had no concerns about pupils' behaviour or about bullying. They trust the staff to deal with any incidents and know they and their children will be listened to.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are aware of the school rules to keep them safe, particularly when playing outdoors. They say they have regular fire drills and that there are reassuring arrangements in place to lock down the school in case of intruders. Pupils benefit from the breakfast and after-school clubs where they can eat nutritious food and socialise with their friends. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and are keen to help others, for example when they organise activities for other children when they become play leaders.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is strong. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and they develop good relationships with their peers. They appreciate visits from the local clergy and develop an understanding of other religions, such as Sikhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. However, their cultural development is not as strong and pupils would benefit from communicating with and learning more about those from backgrounds different to their own.

Attendance is improving. Staff are working extremely hard to encourage children to attend school regularly. They work closely with parents to explain how important it is that their child attends school; sometimes taking appropriate action towards those parents who do not ensure their child attends regularly. Pupils value the rewards they receive for good attendance.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the early years. They are constantly reviewing the provision to make sure that the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for children improve. The evidence can be seen in the four-year rising trend in the proportions of children reaching a good level of development. Children are engaged in a wide variety of interesting and stimulating activities, such as exploring the environment to develop their understanding of the world. There are good opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills both indoors and outdoors. Most children are developing a good pencil grip and are learning to form their numbers and letters correctly. There is evidence in children's books of good progress in their writing over time and it is clear that children are keen to write when engaged in other areas of learning.

Children are using their phonic skills well to tackle unfamiliar words in reading. This is because phonics are taught well from Nursery. Children pronounce the phonic sounds correctly because adults provide good role models. Children know the sounds and actions well and were enthralled when selecting items from the 'magic basket' and identifying initial sounds for each object. Any misconceptions are handled very sensitively and children quickly learn from any mistakes. Children also enjoy identifying rhyming words and learning nursery rhymes.

Children cooperate well together and there are good relationships between children and adults and between children themselves. Children concentrate well and persevere with their tasks. They are friendly and keen to inform visitors what they are learning. Their behaviour is very good and they listen very carefully to one another when working in small groups. They take their responsibilities seriously, especially at 'tidy up' time, and are willing to help one another.

Children in 'Little Legs' are given a positive start to their education. Adults provide good role models, particularly in relation to developing children's speech, language

and communication skills. Children are learning to identify shapes, such as circles, squares and triangles and enjoy early mark making activities. Children are well prepared to enter Nursery.

Arrangements for transition across the early years are a real strength. These are carefully planned for and all staff take responsibility for ensuring children are fully prepared for the next class or stage of their education. If something is not working, leaders take action to address this. For example, by separating 'Little Legs' and Nursery children through the employment of additional staff, children's progress is rapidly improving because learning is more focused on their individual needs.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, for example, through workshops or at the 'reading breakfast'. Staff have opportunities to work with staff from other schools to moderate their assessments of children's achievements and share good practice. This helps to ensure accuracy in assessments. Attendance is a concern in the early years, as parents do not always ensure their children attend sessions. Leaders take this very seriously and are vigilant in following up any absences as they want children to develop good habits from an early stage. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring children are safe. Governors provide a good level of challenge to leaders and there is a governor with particular expertise in the early years, who acts as a link governor, reporting back to the governing body on any developments.

Leadership and Management

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school which is shared with all in the school community. There is a very positive ethos within the school and this results in pupils enjoying their education and showing great respect for others. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. The school development plan has appropriate targets and milestones and it is clear who is leading, monitoring and evaluating the success in these targets. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. Phase leaders have a very good understanding of developments in the keystages for which they hold responsibility. They are able to articulate clearly the impact of their work on outcomes for pupils. The special educational needs coordinator/safeguarding leader is very knowledgeable about each individual child and is persistent in pursuing any concerns to make sure that pupils' needs are addressed. Leaders work effectively as a team, including the business manager, working together to improve outcomes and the attendance of pupils.

Leaders monitor closely the progress of pupils through regular pupil progress meetings. They ensure that prompt action is taken to address any underachievement. They are aware that work remains to be done to improve

outcomes in reading and writing and particularly for disadvantaged pupils in some year groups. They know that more pupils need to achieve a good level of development and to learn their phonic sounds so that they can achieve the required level in the phonic screening check.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is planned carefully to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Pupils enjoy learning about different topics and especially when they have opportunities to practice their literacy and numeracy skills, such as when doing Mayan mathematics or writing about children who used to work in the mines. Pupils enjoy after-school clubs and the wide range of activities available to them such as playing a musical instrument, learning street dance or participating in a range of sports. Older pupils look forward to residential visits, such as to Derwent Hill. Pupils and staff work hard to achieve a wide range of awards such as those in music, art or sport.

Parents spoken to during the visit had very positive views of the school. They value the education and support that their children receive. They say they find staff very approachable and are confident that any concerns they may have will be dealt with promptly.

Pupils do demonstrate they have respect and understanding towards those from backgrounds different to their own. However, their experience of meeting those from different cultures and backgrounds are limited. Safeguarding is effective because staff are vigilant in ensuring all children are safe. However, the child protection policy requires updating.

Governance is strong. Governors have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school and are ambitious for staff and pupils. They take their statutory duties seriously. They visit regularly to see for themselves how well pupils are learning and report back to the full governing body. They provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders, particularly through 'challenge meetings'. They are highly aware of how to keep pupils safe and know that staff are vigilant in addressing any concerns. Governors oversee the arrangements for performance management to ensure that pupils have the best possible education.

Information about this review

The reviewer observed all classes jointly with the headteacher as well as a few small group sessions. The reviewer held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, three members of the governing body, a group of pupils, a small number of parents and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. The reviewer scrutinised a range of documents including information about pupils'

attainment and progress, the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation and a range of policies. The school's website was scrutinised. There were no responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).

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