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Mrs Gill Love
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Dear Mrs Love

Short inspection of Seaton Sluice First School

Following my visit to the school on 11 February 2016, 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 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Highly effective senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers ensure that the majority of pupils, whatever their starting points, make good progress and those who need to catch up do so quickly. Staff skilfully employ the newly developed curriculum and assessment system to engage pupils and regularly review how well they are doing. Effective support from both teachers and teaching assistants is used to tackle quickly any emerging gaps in learning.

Leaders recognise that during the three years to 2015, outcomes in mathematics declined at Key Stage 1. In response, they introduced a new mathematics curriculum and activities which have both engaged and challenged pupils. Pupils have responded positively to this new approach and many of those who spoke with me were eager to describe their enthusiasm for their regular mathematical challenges.

The school is a welcoming, calm and highly creative community. Singing is at the heart of this 'singing school' and supports the excellent behaviour of pupils in assemblies, when lining up after breaks and in the transitions between lessons. Pupils settle quickly to work in lessons and enjoy their learning. Reading is a clear strength of the school; one pupil told me that 'at this school we are addicted to books'. At playtimes pupils socialise well together. Pupils are happy, enjoy their lessons and say that bullying is very rare, and that any issues are resolved quickly

by adults. The large number of staff who returned the questionnaire were unanimous in praising the support they receive from school leaders.

Inspectors identified two areas for improvement at the last inspection: to improve the quality and use of assessment, particularly in Key Stage 1, and to improve the quality and impact of teaching. The high-quality feedback I observed in lessons and in pupils' books, with opportunities for pupils to reflect on and improve their work, shows that the school has clearly acted on this. At the previous inspection, inspectors highlighted the high aspirations of governors, school leaders and teachers for pupils. This strength remains and the work and commitment of the leadership team demonstrates a good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. All staff receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe. There is a calm and purposeful working environment throughout the school which has a positive impact on pupils' conduct and their understanding and tolerance of others. The pupils I met said that they felt very safe in school, knew how to keep themselves safe, and knew who to contact if they had any concerns.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well as a team. They consistently demonstrate their aspirations for further improvement and success to governors and all school staff. They work with drive and passion which enthuses others. They have excellent working relationships with the governing body, and there is a clear mutual respect for the contribution which each makes to the school. All staff and pupils aspire to be as successful as possible.
- Leaders have developed highly efficient systems for checking on pupils' progress in order to identify any individuals or groups who need extra help. Teaching assistants provide high-quality support in class and effective intervention groups provide additional support where required. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to teaching and learning because they are very clear about what the teacher wants them to do and why.
- Teaching has many strengths and has improved since the previous inspection. Observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils and plan lessons and activities to engage and fully enthuse their pupils in all aspects of learning.
- Pupils now make good progress across all areas of the school. The proportion of children in early years achieving a good level of development is steadily increasing. By the end of Year 4, the standards pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics means they are well prepared to make the most of the next stage of their education.

- The school curriculum has been carefully redesigned to give a broad and challenging education, supported by an extensive range of activities on offer outside of lesson times. Pupils say they enjoy their work and the support they receive from adults. They like having time in lessons to review and respond to teachers' comments on completed tasks; evidence from books shows that they use this well to improve the quality of their work. The relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and pupils throughout the school display very positive attitudes to their work.
- The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and is based on a thorough analysis of data and other relevant information. It identifies the correct priorities for the next stage of development. Governors know the school well. They hold senior leaders to account and have ensured that recent changes to leadership and teaching have not disrupted the development of the school and the improving progress of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to build on recent improvements in the achievement of pupils in mathematics by ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver challenging lessons that are closely matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, four members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative from the local authority. I examined a range of documentation relating to school improvement, pupil progress, attendance, behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils. I visited all classrooms, along with the headteacher, to observe teaching and learning, to talk with pupils, and to consider the progress made by pupils in their books. I considered 62 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), 12 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 21 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.