



North Tyneside Council

Children, Young People and Learning
Early Years and School Improvement Service
The Langdale Centre
Langdale Gardens
Howdon
WALLSEND
Tyne and Wear
NE28 0HG

Tel: (0191) 6438588

Fax: (0191) 6438593

E-mail: jonathan.chicken@northtyneside.gov.uk

www.northtyneside.gov.uk

Mr. Stephen Easton
Headteacher
Marine Park First School
Park Road
Whitley Bay
NE26 1LT

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Dear Staff and Governors at Marine Park First School

One-day review of Marine Park First School

Background and History

A one-day assisted school review was carried out on 10 May 2017 by three local authority officers at the request of the headteacher. It was carried out in partnership with school staff and governors. Its purpose was to seek endorsement of the school's current self-evaluation summary.

During the review, a range of activities were undertaken:

- all classes and teaching staff were visited in addition to mixed-age family group lessons during a series of learning walks
- time was spent listening to pupils read, observing sessions that teach pupils the letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and guided reading
- the team spent time observing and finding out about additional support sessions to help pupils catch-up with their classmates
- pupils' work was reviewed
- officers held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, phase leaders, groups of pupils, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), inclusion leader and members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors
- school documentation relating to pupil progress and the impact of the additional pupil premium funding was evaluated
- the records that the school keeps when recruiting staff were checked.

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2007 and its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding. All areas of the school's work, including the quality of teaching were also judged to be outstanding, except for pupils' attendance and governance. These aspects were judged as good. The local authority undertook an assisted review in 2012, a year after the current headteacher took up his post. In the 2012 review, overall effectiveness, the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching were judged to be good. Behaviour and safety and the effectiveness of leadership and management were judged at that time to be outstanding.

The 2017 review confirms that the school's self evaluation is accurate and that there is sufficient evidence to support an overall effectiveness judgement of OUTSTANDING.

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and this has enabled a very positive climate where children and adults thrive. The headteacher and staff understand the clear impact that their work has; there is absolutely no complacency. Leaders (including governors), teachers and other adults constantly strive to enhance the provision for children and families that attend the school.

The headteacher and school leaders provide energy and enthusiasm to the improvements they drive and, together, have clear procedures for sharing information and ideas within the school. As a result, school leaders are knowledgeable and understand the school's strengths and areas of further development and have taken sharply focussed action to ensure that pupils' outcomes continue to improve.

The school's development plan is a very detailed working document and, together, leaders use it to address areas for improvement successfully. Teachers use the school's assessment system with confidence to ensure that teaching challenges pupils to make even stronger progress in reading and mathematics and especially writing. Rates of progress have been high compared to the average over time. School staff quickly overcame the challenges of embedding the new assessment arrangements in key stage 1 and, in 2017, school information suggests that the proportions of pupils on track to reach or exceed the expected standards will return to those typical for the school.

Governors are exceptionally well informed. They know the school well because they visit regularly and provide appropriate challenge through their effective committee structure. The questions asked by governors, for example about the impact and sustainability of the PE and sport premium, lead to further improvements in the school's effectiveness. Nevertheless, governors do not rest on their laurels and are mindful that their challenges and questions to school leaders need to be even more concise to enable them to bring further refinements to the school's provision.

The leadership of teaching is exemplary and well documented performance and improvement cycles enable consistent teaching that is highly effective. Through embedded initiatives such as the Teacher Learning Communities, school leaders have created a culture of reflection and debate that leads to improvement. Pedagogical improvements such as quality questioning that develops pupils' reasoning and deeper thinking are consistently evident in classrooms and through the detailed written feedback that pupils receive from their teachers. Teaching overall, is never less than good, is often outstanding, usually inspiring and based on teachers' deep understanding of the subjects they teach and the way that individual pupils learn.

The performance management of staff is well-led and managed. Leaders do not shy away from tackling any minor differences in standards or performance. Managers at all levels set very high expectations of all staff, through their own example and link this to the outcomes

they expect from pupils. The cycle of improvement is effective because monitoring is incisive and points for improvement are always revisited at the next opportunity. As a result, the school has a strong capacity to refine the quality of teaching and learning further.

Teaching assistants have been successfully trained in appropriate strategies and methods, including research-based interventions. These key staff are performance managed effectively using similar systems to those of teachers. As a result, they feel valued, perform well and, at times, are indistinguishable from teachers.

Children join the school's nursery with knowledge and skills that are typical overall. However, there is often a variation in their knowledge and skills; the proportion of pupils that join the school with more advanced skills is similar to that of pupils who join with fewer skills. From these individual starting points, rates of progress have continued to rise because the early years are exceptionally well-led. Leaders and teachers are relentless in their analysis of information about individual children's achievements and focus on any minor subject and gender differences that remain through objective-led planning.

Provision in the nursery and reception classes is of a very high quality and learning activities are closely linked to children's interests. The environment is highly stimulating and enables children's experiences to be rich and varied such as when concocting the giant's stew linked to the Jack and Beanstalk theme. As a result, the proportion of children who go on to reach the good level of development over time has remained well above the national average. The rate of improvement continues to be better than that found nationally and, as a result, almost all children are ready to successfully access the key stage 1 curriculum when they move to year 1.

The proportion of year 1 pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standard in the phonics screening check is rising, and remained above the national average in 2016.

By the end of year 2, the proportions of pupils, including the most able, who meet or exceed the standard is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Across the school, the number of pupils, including the small number from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve the expected or the more challenging greater depth standard remains above the national average where comparators exist.

Current rates of progress in the school in reading, writing and mathematics, including those at key stage 2, are better than expected with a notable consistency between classes and groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with a special educational need or disability.

The arrangements to plan personalised learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or a disability are effective and plans are in place to manage forthcoming staff change. Leaders recognise the need to refresh some aspects of the school's record keeping to ensure that the current SEND code of practice is fully embraced and have formed plans to ensure that this is in place for the new school year.

Parents are highly supportive of the school's work. A recent survey continued the positive trend, firmly endorsing the school's work. Levels of parental engagement in school life remain high and written feedback from parents, for example to end of year pupil reports, is glowing in its praise of the school and its leadership.

The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education very well, in particular through the broad and colourful curriculum, where exciting extra-curricular provision enriches pupils' learning experience. Pupils particularly appreciate the high quality real learning experiences that are regularly provided during school visits. Tuesday and Thursday (nurture) Club supports pupils with their individual needs and the school's family groups promote cross-phase community throughout the school. Working with older and younger friends is valued and enjoyed by everyone. Children enjoy innovative peer massage sessions and understand its effect to promote self- and peer-respect as well as a calm atmosphere which promotes learning. As a result of these approaches the school is harmonious, happy and friendly and enables pupils to enjoy very positive relationships with one another.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding within the school. School leaders including governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality and are exceptionally well managed with obvious pride by those staff involved. All staff place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and providing strong pastoral care for them.

Staff have appropriate training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Leaders are persistent when concerned about pupils' welfare and work with external agencies as necessary. Governors regularly and conscientiously check that the safeguarding and child protection procedures in school are robust and up to date.

Pupils state that they feel secure and safe within school, knowing that adults will help them if they have any worries. Pupils who spoke to the review team understood what bullying is and said that bullying is not an issue in the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different settings. They explain, confidently, how staff teach them to stay safe when, for example, they walk near roads or when online using internet and social media tools. One pupil described the school as 'safe and kind'.

Next steps

School leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the clear momentum for ongoing improvement is maintained and refinements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are sustained
- aspects of record keeping and terminology used in the support of pupils with special educational needs or a disability are updated to reflect the current code of practice
- they explore ways of developing concise headlines in relation to key areas of school work drawing on the detailed documentation already in place
- opportunities to share the school's very best practices with other schools are explored.

Thank you for the opportunity of working with you and your staff team.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Chicken
Senior School Improvement Officer