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Mr Richard Bollands  
Headteacher  
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Red Row  
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Dear Mr Richard Bollands

### **Short inspection of Red Row First School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017, 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 February 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your dedication and ambition to provide a good education for all of your pupils, both academically and personally, is shared by the staff team. You have created a culture of mutual respect where staff are keen to reflect on their own effectiveness and to learn from each other. They are unafraid to act as critical friends to each other because they are united in their desire to do the best for their pupils. You encourage staff to be outward looking and help them to do this through the partnerships you have forged with other schools in the local area and beyond. You and your governors have invested heavily in supporting staff to gain training to help them progress to the next stage in their career. This has supported you to address successfully the issues for improvement at the last inspection, which were to develop middle leaders and improve the early years. Consequently, the quality of teaching continues to improve and supports the good progress of pupils.

Staff, pupils and governors all agree that the changes made to help pupils manage their own behaviour and support their social and emotional development have made the biggest difference to the school. It is a calm, friendly and welcoming environment where pupils are polite and helpful to adults and to each other. Pupils fully understand the few rules to help them behave. They value the opportunity to talk through and resolve their individual concerns with a specially trained member of staff during specific time set aside, known as bubble time. The most vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well supported by staff who have a deep understanding of

their social and emotional needs. Over time, these pupils are enabled to develop the resilience and confidence to participate fully in school life.

You have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your plans to improve the areas which require further development are based on a careful analysis of pupils' progress and standards reached in a wide range of subjects. This is added to your accurate and perceptive knowledge of the strengths and development areas for individual members of staff. Your detailed plans support governors to ensure that developments stay on track. Your frequent checking of pupils' progress enables you and your staff to pinpoint the support needed to prevent pupils from falling behind in their learning. Your analysis has identified the improvements required in some subjects, including science.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your staff care deeply about the safety and welfare of all pupils. Staff are ever vigilant and keep detailed records to ensure that no concerns are overlooked. Each member of staff is issued with a reminder of the most important points and actions they need to follow to keep children safe. They are confident about the procedures to use if any incidents occur.

You manage referrals to other agencies diligently and persist when you continue to have concerns. You ensure that relevant staff have the information they need to provide effective support to pupils who are experiencing challenges in their life. Your personal commitment extends to working alongside other colleagues and the local authority to improve their policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe.

Pupils' good behaviour enables them to feel safe in school. Incidents which occur at playtime or lunchtime are quickly and calmly resolved so learning is not disrupted. School records and discussions with pupils confirm that bullying and name-calling are extremely rare. Pupils' commitment to valuing all children equally was summed up by one pupil who said, 'The world would be boring if we were all the same like robots!'

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. For example, they know the importance of following school rules, of how to cross the road safely and the importance of taking the correct dose of medicine. They know the dangers of using the internet and what they should do to combat those dangers.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have planned carefully and thoughtfully for the imminent retirement of experienced senior and middle leaders to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities. New leaders have been trained to understand the responsibilities they hold, learning from colleagues in other schools as well as your own. You have supported them to work alongside their experienced colleagues so they know the strengths and points for development in their subject and leadership

responsibilities. Their frequent checking of pupils' progress enables them to pinpoint the support needed to prevent pupils from falling behind in their learning. They also identify the areas of the curriculum that are not as strongly taught. This information helps them to plan for future improvement. You recognise that more needs to be done to develop leaders' skills further so that they can gain a more in-depth understanding of the quality of teaching in their subjects. Plans are in place to develop these skills.

- I was keen to explore your response to the dip in standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 which took place in 2016. In response to the dip in standards in reading, you and middle leaders quickly realised that pupils' limited vocabulary restricted their ability to understand a text and to develop their inference and deduction skills. Consequently, you introduced a structured approach to widening pupils' vocabulary, alongside providing more opportunities to practise inference and deduction skills. The teaching of reading has become more precise and there have been concerted attempts to engage parents and carers to support their children's reading.
- Developments in writing are not yet fully embedded and your middle leaders recognise that too few pupils reach the higher standard in writing because they still make too many errors in their spelling and basic punctuation. This is despite the introduction of editing stations, which helps them review and improve the quality of their work. As a result of the actions you have taken, increased proportions of pupils attained the expected standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 in 2017. The gains made in key stage 1 have been maintained across key stage 2 so that the majority of pupils leave the school at the expected standard for their age in both subjects. However, you recognise that there are still too few pupils exceeding the expected standard in writing.
- At the end of the early years, the proportions of children achieving a good level of development were increasing slowly but were below the national average. To address this the early years leader has supported staff to adapt their teaching to match children's needs more accurately. They gain a good knowledge of children's interests and capabilities through regular assessment and discussion with parents. Children sustain their concentration because they are motivated to learn. They think more deeply as a result of the adults in their class using effective questioning. Consequently the proportion of children attaining a good level of development in 2017 was close to the national average. Their independence and motivation and curiosity are well developed and they are ready to tackle the curriculum in Year 1. The early years leader has a good grasp of which areas need further development and is keen to tackle them.
- An aspect of school leadership I wanted to explore was how well you use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. You, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the challenges these pupils may experience and you have implemented appropriate initiatives to overcome the challenges. For example, a speech and language therapist has been employed to train staff and to support with the development of children's early language skills. The success of this and other initiatives has enabled this group of pupils to

progress well. Although the funding is generally well targeted it has not been used to improve the poorer attendance of this group of pupils.

- Although overall pupil attendance had been rising in the school, it fell in 2017 and was below average. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals had attendance which was lower and there were higher proportions of these pupils with persistent absence. You and your governors are aware of the importance of good attendance. You check attendance regularly and follow up absence. You have introduced a range of incentives to celebrate good attendance. Nevertheless, improvements have not been sustained over time and you recognise that more needs to be done.
- You have identified that the standards pupils reach in some subjects are not as high as those reached in reading, writing and mathematics and you have begun to tackle this. You rightly recognise the strength of physical education teaching, which is taught by a specialist. The developments which have taken place in history and geography are improving pupils' skills and knowledge in these subjects. This is at an early stage of development and you know that more has to be done to improve the quality of science teaching in particular.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to refine work to improve pupils' attendance overall and reduce the proportions of pupils who are persistently absent, particularly those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- continue to develop pupils' writing skills so that their spelling and basic punctuation improves, enabling a greater proportion of pupils to reach higher standards in the subject
- further develop the curriculum to ensure that standards attained in a wider range of subjects, including science, are as high as in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Susan Waugh  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the subject leaders for English and for early years. I also met all teachers and a group of teaching assistants. You and I visited lessons in each key stage. I met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school, including their views of pupils' behaviour. I listened to some pupils read and looked in their workbooks when in lessons. I also conducted scrutinies of pupils' work with you and with the English subject leaders. I considered the seven responses from the online questionnaire Parent View, spoke to parents and looked at the school's own pupil and parent surveys. A range of documents was considered, relating to safeguarding, attendance and external evaluations of the school. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments and I looked at the school's website.