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Mr Bill Foreman  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Foreman

### **Short inspection of Dunston Hill Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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 March 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 unrelenting focus on developing the quality of teaching has resulted in better outcomes for pupils at every key stage. Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well across the curriculum. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have increased significantly since the previous inspection. A higher than average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for their secondary school education.

Pupils love their school. They enjoy the breadth of the curriculum opportunities open to them, especially the range of educational visits, such as a recent residential visit to Edinburgh to visit Dynamic Earth. By the time they are in key stage 2, pupils demonstrate exceptionally mature attitudes to their learning. Most pupils behave well. They recognise and appreciate the good support and encouragement they receive from adults to help them with their work. Pupils are proud to serve the school as house captains and school councillors. They feel that they have a voice, through the suggestions box, to make their views known. This has enabled them to influence the choice of clubs on offer after school. Pupils feel safe in school, confident that, where any issues arise, staff are on hand to resolve them quickly. The large majority of parents are supportive of the school. One parent's comment typified that of many: 'From the clear passion and involvement by the head in his school, to the fantastic enthusiasm, imagination and dedication of its teaching staff, this school encompasses everything a

parent could possibly hope for in their child's education experience'.

Accurate self-evaluation has allowed you to pinpoint the aspects of the school's provision which needed to improve and to take the right action to address them. Significant investment in the professional development of staff, including coaching provided by senior leaders, has enabled you to grow a strong team of staff who share your vision for the school. They feel valued and are never afraid to ask for support or advice because of the professional, reflective culture which you have established over time. Most middle leaders are fulfilling their roles effectively because they have benefited from working alongside senior leaders to develop their leadership skills. This has enabled them to improve teaching and pupils' achievement in their subject areas and phases. You recognise that where you have appointed new leaders recently, such as in early years, they require further support to ensure that they meet your high expectations and are fully accountable for the outcomes achieved by pupils in their area of leadership.

Improvements to the quality of teaching in mathematics have been particularly successful, resulting in strong progress and above-average standards of attainment for pupils by the end of key stage 2. Similarly, in writing, by the end of Year 6, a better than average proportion of pupils now reach and exceed the expected standard for their age. You have correctly identified that boys' attainment in writing, particularly in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2, is not as strong as it should be. While you have already begun to address this, you know that there is more to do so that they achieve as well as they can.

Over time, you have developed the teaching of reading so that more pupils make strong progress to reach the expected standard for their age. Investment in a new reading scheme and the introduction of 'reading buddies' have helped to develop pupils' love of reading. However, in 2017, fewer pupils reached the highest standard of attainment in reading by the end of Year 6. You have already begun to explore this issue and recognise that it is a priority for improvement.

I was particularly interested, in this inspection, to explore the quality of provision in early years and the progress of boys and disadvantaged children. Over time, you have improved the proportion of children making better progress to reach the good level of development for their age. Leaders have also taken effective action so that more boys reach this expected standard. However, you recognise that there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and that more disadvantaged children need to make faster progress in reading, writing and number.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and know what needs to be improved. They benefit from good-quality support from the local authority link inspector. This has helped them to validate the detailed information they receive from school leaders, which they explore and challenge. Leaders and governors do keep a check on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, they recognise that they have not undertaken a sharp enough evaluation of the spending of pupil premium funding. This limits their ability to identify which actions are having the most impact. They also acknowledge that they have not kept a close enough eye on the school's website to ensure that it complies with statutory guidance for what schools must publish online.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are made to verify the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Records of safeguarding incidents show that leaders take appropriate action to follow up concerns.

The curriculum enables pupils to understand risks to their safety. For example, they demonstrate an excellent understanding of the 'rules' they should follow to keep themselves safe online. Pupils are tolerant of others and work consciously to embody the school's ethos of 'care and respect for all'. Pupils told me that bullying is not an issue in their school and the school's records reflect that incidents are very rare.

Leaders' honest self-evaluation reflects that while most pupils behave exceptionally well, a very few pupils occasionally display more challenging behaviour. Records of the school's work to support these pupils show that staff are taking appropriate action, including involving external agencies where this is necessary. Leaders' work has led to a reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour from this group of pupils.

## **Inspection findings**

- Across the school, but particularly in key stage 2, there is a 'buzz' in classrooms when mathematics is being taught. Pupils are challenged, routinely, by teachers to explain their mathematical reasoning. Pupils have sound knowledge of number facts, which enables them to calculate with fluency. Teachers focus on embedding important mathematical skills and habits. As a result, pupils consider, consciously, the most efficient methods of calculation and work systematically when tackling the complex problems that they are asked to solve. This high-quality teaching in mathematics, much improved over time, has led to very strong progress and above-average standards of attainment in mathematics. In particular, a better than average proportion of pupils reach the highest standard by the end of key stage 2.
- You know that not enough pupils are reaching the highest standard of attainment in reading by the end of Year 6. An effective analysis of this issue has enabled leaders to conclude, correctly, that pupils are not being challenged to develop their skills of inference and deduction. Too much work focuses on pupils retrieving simple information from texts and this slows their progress. Leaders have also recognised that pupils need access to more demanding reading material so that they can be challenged well to consider the author's development of character and themes and the use of language and structure for effect. Leaders have already instigated a review of their reading curriculum to begin to address this aspect of teaching.
- Over time, the achievement of children in early years has improved. Leaders' targeted action, through additional support for groups of children, has enabled more boys to achieve the expected standard for their age by the end of Reception Year. While a similar approach has improved the attainment of disadvantaged children in some areas of learning, a lower than average proportion are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and number. Some adult-led, small-group teaching is securing stronger progress. For example, when children were making kites on a very windy day in the outdoor art studio, an adult facilitated children's learning through excellent, probing questions. However, at times, including where children are free to

choose their learning, some activities lack purpose and sufficient challenge and progress slows, particularly for those children with lower prior attainment. Leaders are aware of this and have already undertaken a full review of early years provision, with the support of the local authority. This review has identified, accurately, the aspects of provision which need to be developed further so that all children achieve as well as they can.

- Leaders recognise that boys are not attaining as well as girls in writing in some classes in Years 1 to 3. Improved outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 show that some boys are making faster progress to catch up because of well-focused teaching. However, for some boys, progress in writing remains inconsistent. Phase leaders are addressing this through precisely targeted support for small groups of pupils and it remains a priority for the school.
- During this inspection, I was keen to check that pupils achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' workbooks show that they experience regular teaching across a wide range of subjects and that the work is matched to their needs. Activities are varied and pupils are encouraged to develop their own lines of enquiry and explore aspects of subjects which interest them. Provision in some subjects, such as physical education (PE) and science, has been strengthened because subject leaders have the time they need to support staff to improve the quality of teaching. This has helped to secure good outcomes for pupils across most subjects. Senior leaders are determined to ensure that pupils' achievement is outstanding across all subjects. They have recently appointed a new leader who has already begun a review of the curriculum to make sure that teachers plan meticulously for progression in all subject-specific skills so that pupils can achieve at the highest standards possible.
- Leaders track the achievement of disadvantaged pupils closely. Targets to manage the performance of teachers focus on improvements for this group of pupils and teachers are held to account through regular progress review meetings. Over time, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics has increased from below average to broadly in line with national averages at the end of key stage 1. Current assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make at least expected progress, with many making better progress through the targeted support they receive. Leaders do keep a check on the difference that this support is making and they know where pupils' attainment needs to improve further. However, senior leaders, including governors, have not brought this information together to gain a clear, strategic oversight of the effectiveness of their work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enables more pupils to reach the highest standards in reading by the end of Year 6
- leadership of early years is strengthened and inconsistencies in teaching are eradicated so that more disadvantaged children reach the expected standards in

reading, writing and number

- boys' attainment in writing continues to improve so that more reach the expected standard for their age
- the school's website includes all the information that schools are required to publish online, including a strategic evaluation of the impact of pupil premium spending.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and the acting deputy headteacher. I also met with the vice-chair of the governing body and three other governors. I discussed the school's journey of improvement with the school's local authority link inspector. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you and with the acting deputy headteacher. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I reviewed pupils' work in a range of subjects in a sample of their workbooks. I met with a group of middle leaders, including those responsible for leading each phase of the school. You presented: information detailing pupils' progress and attainment; the school self-evaluation document; the school development plan; and your arrangements for checking on the performance of teachers. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils, including records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents, were checked. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 87 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).