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Ms Kirsty Broome  
Headteacher  
Hassell Primary School  
Barracks Road  
Newcastle-Under-Lyme  
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Dear Ms Broome

### **Short inspection of Hassell Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2015, 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 September 2010.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are successfully realising your values to create a happy, caring atmosphere within which everyone is encouraged to achieve their full potential and develop a love of learning. Many parents commented favourably on how well the school responds to their children's special educational needs.

You and other leaders have a frank and accurate view of what the school does well and where it still needs to improve. Previously identified issues have been tackled and this has resulted in significant improvements.

Test results show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics have continued to improve since the last inspection. This has been achieved through good teaching and support and work that is set at the right level for individuals. Consequently:

- the most-able pupils have done very well in all their subjects, including mathematics
- disadvantaged pupils have done particularly well in exceeding the attainment of other pupils nationally in Years 2 and 6
- boys made a significantly high rate of progress in Key Stage 1
- outcomes in early years have improved rapidly.

The high level of attendance and low rates of persistent absence ensure that pupils are in school regularly and show that they clearly enjoy their learning. This view is supported by parents, who also praised the school for its sense of 'community' and 'inclusion'.

In the last inspection your leadership was commended by inspectors for successfully embedding ambition and driving improvements. You have effectively carried on doing these things through a time of significant change in leaders and governors. Inspectors also noted that achievement in mathematics, especially for most-able pupils, needed to improve and this has now been achieved.

You have recognised that a recent change in leadership roles is one of the reasons the school is not yet outstanding. A number of leaders have not been in their posts long enough to demonstrate their impact and a permanent coordinator for early years is yet to be appointed. You have also identified that the marking of pupils' work is not yet of a consistently high standard.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders are meticulous in making sure that pupils are kept safe and this is supported by almost all the parents and pupils surveyed or spoken to. Leaders make sure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that the record keeping and reporting is comprehensive. Governors are also well trained and acutely aware of their responsibilities to ensure that the school meets all its statutory duties.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils are making good progress throughout the school. Leaders know this from the tracking arrangements introduced, which allow them to analyse how well each individual and significant group is doing. As a result, they can pinpoint in each year group if any pupils are at risk of falling behind and intervene swiftly. This has led to significantly improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils.
- Additional funding such as the pupil premium has been used well to provide specific support for disadvantaged pupils so that by the end of Year 2 the attainment gap has been closed and by Year 6 it has been exceeded with other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Last year a group of boys in Year 2 were targeted for additional support and consequently their rates of progress accelerated considerably. Currently, a small number of boys in Year 4 have been identified for additional support. This is because they find sustained concentration hard, especially when they find writing challenging.
- Test results in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 and assessments in Year 2 improved again in 2015 to be further above the national average.

- Outcomes for pupils in early years significantly improved in 2015 so that the proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception was above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) at the end of Year 1 also rose in 2015 to be further above the national average.
- Leaders and governors know strengths of teaching well and have accurately identified areas for further improvement. Where any previous weaknesses in teaching were identified leaders have taken rapid action to bring about improvements through close monitoring and support.
- Teachers plan lessons that fully engage the interest and attention of pupils. The wide range of subjects and topics on offer gives pupils a broad and varied curriculum. Pupils spoken to were enthusiastic about their lessons, including French, science and personal, social and health education.
- The sports premium is used well to encourage greater uptake by pupils, especially through activities such as inter-school competitions.
- Teachers and additional adults are highly successfully in integrating pupils with special educational needs well and making sure work is set at the right level of challenge for them.
- Teachers are less experienced in teaching pupils learning English as an additional language, some of whom have had no previous schooling. You have responded well to this by recently appointing a coordinator and making arrangements for whole-school training later this term.
- Through wider checking of pupils' work you have recognised that teachers' marking is not always of a consistently high standard and you have identified this as a priority for improvement. The written feedback pupils receive does not always help them sufficiently to know how they can improve their work.
- Almost all pupils behave very well in lessons and are highly motivated. They get on well with each other and report that bullying is very unusual. On the very rare occasion that an incident arises highly trained staff respond swiftly and effectively and link well with other agencies and parents where necessary.
- The very large majority of parents who responded either to the school survey or via the Parent View free text were positive about all aspects of the school and its leaders. A very small minority had concerns around communication. Inspectors found that school leaders use a range of ways to communicate effectively with parents.
- Following staffing changes and a restructured senior leadership team you are taking steps to increase leadership capacity further but in some instances this is at an early stage of development. For example, you have taken on temporarily the role of leadership of early years in addition to your leadership of special educational needs, child protection, assessment and support for newly qualified teachers. Although you are carrying out

these roles effectively and are well supported by the newly appointed deputy headteacher, this is a heavy workload commitment.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers' written feedback to pupils is of a consistently high quality so that pupils always know how they can improve their work or move to the next stage in their learning
- a permanent coordinator for early years is appointed as soon as possible
- all staff are well trained so that they can more effectively support pupils new to learning English as an additional language in the classroom.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met you and your recently appointed deputy headteacher as well as other members of staff including the English as an additional language coordinator. I met the vice chair of the governing body in the absence of the chair and spoke to another governor by telephone. I took part in four lesson observations with you and observed pupils as they moved around the school. I met with a group of nine pupils from Years 1 to 4. I took account of 35 Parent View free text responses and 87 responses to the school's recent parental survey. I considered the school's analysis of recent pupil performance and evaluated other records, including those concerning keeping pupils safe. Year 5 and 6 pupils were away all day on a trip during my visit, as was one of your senior leaders. Therefore, in their absence, I conducted a book scrutiny of their work in English and mathematics.