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Rachel Purvis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Purvis

Short inspection of Great Hucklow CE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

In this very small school, you and your team create a warm, family environment where pupils feel safe and are valued as unique individuals. You provide a range of interesting and stimulating experiences for pupils and encourage wide participation in musical activities, sporting competitions, residential trips and after school clubs. As a result, pupils talk about their school with enthusiasm and pride. A strong Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life and contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils generally enjoy their lessons and are keen to talk about what they are learning. For example, younger pupils were excited as they explored differences between life in Kenya and Great Britain through a quiz activity. In Years 3 and 4, pupils enjoyed using their calculation skills to solve real-life problems using cake recipes. However, teachers do not consistently provide high enough levels of challenge throughout the lesson for pupils of all abilities. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' thinking and ideas and to develop pupils' independent learning skills. Consequently, there is little outstanding teaching in the school. You

recognise that securing this higher level of teaching consistently, in all classes, is key to fulfilling your ambition to become an outstanding school.

At the last inspection, inspectors commended the school for providing a happy and caring environment where pupils enjoy learning, make good progress from the start, attend regularly and behave well. The school has maintained almost all of these positive aspects. However, the above-average attendance reported at the last inspection has not been maintained. You have rightly identified this as a matter for urgent action and are tackling this with rigour and determination. Inspectors also identified the following areas for improvement: improving the consistency of teaching by sharing good practice more effectively, providing consistent feedback to pupils which is linked to their learning targets and giving pupils more opportunities to respond to teachers' comments in their books. In addition, the inspector asked the school to improve pupils' awareness of other cultures and backgrounds by providing them with more opportunities to meet and mix with pupils who live in contrasting localities and who have different backgrounds from their own.

You have provided teachers with opportunities to share good practice through team teaching and visits to other schools. Nevertheless, most teaching is not outstanding and the best outcomes for all pupils are not fully realised. Staff ensure that the school's marking policy is implemented consistently across the school. As a result, the quality of teachers' marking has improved since the last inspection.

You provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to be taught about and experience a range of cultures different to their own through trips, visitors and assemblies. In this way, and through teaching pupils about important values such as respect and tolerance, you are ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

You and your team have high aspirations for pupils and are continually striving to improve the school. You have rightly identified the areas where more work is needed and leaders, governors and staff have the capacity to make improvements successfully.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. Pupils feel safe in the school and say that they are well cared for. Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. Staff are kept up to date with current government guidance and the culture of safeguarding within the school is effective.

Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves and others safe. They are often able to resolve any disagreements themselves because, as one pupil explained, 'we are one big family'. Parents, staff and pupils confirm that bullying is rare. Staff know the pupils and their families

extremely well and consequently any issues are swiftly resolved. Pupils are taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet and know the immediate actions to take if they view anything that causes them concern.

Inspection findings

The headteacher has the overwhelming backing and support of parents for her uncompromising leadership, which has ensured that pupils receive a good quality of education over time.

- Since the previous inspection, governors have been highly successful in securing appropriate funding to bring about significant improvements to the school building and learning environment. The governing body understands the strengths of the school and where further improvement is needed.
- The information about how well pupils are doing varies a lot from year to year because of the very small number of pupils in each year group, as well as for the different groups represented at the school. As such, caution needs to be exercised when drawing conclusions from very small sub-groups. However, almost all pupils make at least the progress expected for children of their age. Over the last three years, standards of attainment have mostly been in line with or above those expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. However, the proportions of pupils making more than expected progress at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, although improving, are below those seen nationally.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds that they make) in the early years and Key Stage 1 does not always fully support pupils in developing their skills in blending and sounding letters so that they can unlock new words. As a result, too few pupils reach the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check. You know that there is more to do to ensure that the daily teaching of phonics is consistently good.
- Pupils have good mathematical skills. They carry out mental and written calculations confidently and accurately. However, although they solve problems regularly, more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged through more complex problems which involve several steps and different types of calculation or logic. This prevents the most-able mathematicians from making the progress they should.
- Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books and can discuss different authors and the types of books they are reading. Many older readers read with fluency and expression and leave school as confident readers.
- Pupils are given regular practice in developing their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, they are not always precise in using these skills when doing extended writing. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were keen to share the letters they had recently written describing how they had seen a horse in the middle of no man's land, based on *War Horse*.

However, the most-able writers do not have enough opportunities to use more complex styles of writing and consequently do not write to a high enough standard.

- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are effectively supported through early identification and action. The school liaises effectively with other agencies to ensure that the pupils and their families get the full range of help available to them. As a result, many of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The school is making excellent use of the primary school sports funding. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports, including football, tag rugby, basketball, cricket, rounders and orienteering. They have good opportunities to compete against other schools locally, as well as at county level. Pupils confirm that they enjoy taking part in sport and understand the contribution it makes to developing a healthy lifestyle.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils enjoy discussing a range of topics, including how well the school is preparing them for the next stage of their education and their aspirations for the future.
- The school has developed strong partnerships with parents and carers, as well as with the local community. Many parents spoke about the difference they believe the school makes to their children because of the exceptional standards of care and support which the school provides to pupils and their families. You are working hard with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. You have put a range of strategies in place to support a few pupils who have a track record of persistent absence and have raised the importance of attendance across the school. As a result, current attendance figures indicate an improving picture.

Next steps for the school:

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- most teaching is outstanding so that more pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- teachers and teaching assistants improve their skills in the teaching of phonics so that the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check is at least in line with the national average.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, two representatives from the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day and considered the views of 20 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.