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29 February 2016

Mrs J Jackson  
Headteacher  
Durham Newton Hall Infants' School  
Langley Road  
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Durham  
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Dear Mrs Jackson

### **Short inspection of Durham Newton Hall Infants' 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 October 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 have continued to provide measured and considerate leadership to the school. You have ensured pupils get a good start to their school experience, developing effective learning skills and positive attitudes towards school and each other. Parents really appreciate your leadership. They say you are approachable and listen and know their child as an individual.

Children join the school having reached a level of development typical for their age and quite a few children exceed the expected level. You recognise this means you have to ensure that pupils make good progress so that they meet the highest standards of which they are capable. You and the staff team make sure a good proportion of pupils reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

You also recognise there have been some dips in standards achieved by some pupils and that not all pupils achieve as well as others. This includes the very small number of pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs, and the increasing proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. When this happens you look very carefully at the reasons why and make changes to what the school provides so all pupils get the best chance to reach the highest standards.

Since the previous inspection you have improved the progress pupils make in writing through developing a range of strategies and opportunities for them to write in different ways during the school day. Subject leaders have benefited from the skills the new deputy headteacher has brought to the school. They confirm that the coaching she provides helps them to develop their skills as leaders. Subject leaders actively support other teachers to understand and use the recently introduced assessment methods, and in developing new approaches to teaching mathematics.

The outdoor learning space provided for the youngest children has doubled in size since the previous inspection. This means children have space to develop all their skills in different ways. We talked about providing more challenges to children's literacy and mathematical development in the outdoor space. This was not a strong feature when we visited the space or in the photographic records in the children's learning profiles.

The governing body has reconstituted since the previous inspection. They have a good understanding of the work of the school and do challenge you and other leaders to make sure all pupils are getting the best possible outcomes. Governors recognise that some aspects of their work need further development. This includes publishing up-to-date information on the school website and how they check the impact of some aspects of the school's work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Working closely with the Chair of the Governing Body, you make sure all checks take place to ensure you only employ suitable staff. Staff records show you have a robust approach to this key safeguarding requirement. You ensured a minor omission was rectified very quickly on the day of the inspection. Staff are kept up to date with all aspects of safeguarding. Staff confirmed they are alert to signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and knew what to do if this was the case. Where training had lapsed in one area you have made sure an update is booked in the near future.

### **Inspection findings**

- Teachers make sure that lessons interest pupils, as well as challenging them to think deeply and learn how to work independently. Pupils' books showed that the recently introduced marking system helps them to make good progress. Further appropriate developments are in the pipeline to ensure pupils are really clear about what the teacher expects them to learn in each lesson and how to check they have understood.
- When we visited lessons you demonstrated that you could identify how teachers could be more effective; for example, by using a wider range of resources to help the pupils understand different mathematical concepts and to help them develop their mathematical reasoning skills.
- Pupils are keen to learn. The Reception class children show this not only in their school books but in the 'My world' books that they work in at home. This work usefully forms part of the checks that teachers make on the progress children are making.

- Some parents do not make sure their children come to school as often as they should. Your work with these families to stress the importance of regular school attendance has varying success.
- Good support from the local authority advisory teacher for pupils whose first language is not English means the very small, but increasing, number of pupils who are new to English make rapid progress. You make sure there is a good range of books and activities to help these pupils know that their culture and faith is important and respected.
- Parents and visitors make an important contribution to all pupils' understanding of the wider world and contribute to their spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils' cultural development is well catered for through the wide range of sporting, music and arts activities you provide. For example, pupils enjoy practising their already accomplished skipping skills at playtimes.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Most importantly, pupils show they feel safe in school, through their confidence in lessons and during playtimes. They talked about being friends with each other. They also said they would be nice to any new children coming to their school and readily accepted that children come from different kinds of families.
- Children in the Reception classes make good progress from their strong starting points. They respond equally well to activities directed by teachers and those they choose themselves. The balance allows them to develop good attending and listening skills, so they are well prepared for the more formal approach taken in Year 1.
- You and everyone connected to the school are rightly proud of the wide range of awards and quality standards the school has achieved. Your current work to achieve the 'Rights Respecting School Award' is helping to promote the all-important British values.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop a wider range of resources and approaches to help all pupils, from their different starting points and backgrounds, develop how they use their mathematical knowledge to work out different types of problems
- the governing body keeps up to date with new statutory duties and reviews policies in a timely manner.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Durham County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I discussed with you aspects of the school's work and jointly visited every class for varying amounts of time. I met with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. I reviewed the minutes of the governing body meetings. I met with the local authority representative who has first-hand knowledge of the school. I also met with two subject leaders, who kindly gave up some of their lunchtime to meet me. I took note of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

I talked with several pupils during playtime, as well as in classrooms when I visited their lessons. I also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I looked through pupils' books, learning profiles and 'My World' books and took account of the school's information about their current progress.

I talked with several parents as they arrived at school with their children and considered the 31 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey for parents) and 23 free text responses.