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Mr Michael Poole  
Headteacher  
Stramongate Primary School  
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Cumbria  
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Dear Mr Poole

### **Short inspection of Stramongate Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 June 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 predecessor school was judged to be to be good in February 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. No stone is left unturned as you and your staff strive to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential academically, socially and emotionally. Inclusion is well promoted and the uniqueness of each child is respected by all staff. Since becoming an academy, the school has taken the decision to give priority admission to pupils who have special educational needs or disability. You also discussed with me how the demographics of the school are changing with a growing number of families from eastern Europe moving into the locality. For many of these children English is a difficult language. Consequently, you recognise the importance of carrying out initial assessments of what children can do in their home language to get a like-for-like comparison.

You and the governors are continually looking for ways to improve the school and any underperformance is tackled with vigour. This is reflected in the way that you swiftly responded to a recent dip in standards, particular in reading, writing and phonics and put strategies in place to address these. As a result, the school's information on pupils' performance clearly shows that from low starting points most children are making good progress and achieving well.

The school is well supported by the local community and has a strong partnership with most parents. Those that I spoke to told me that their children enjoyed coming to school and they make good progress. Parents find your staff are 'friendly, professional and approachable'. They believe that you lead the school well and that

you have a 'good repartee' with pupils. Parents of those pupils who have special educational needs were very keen to tell me about the good progress their children make and the effective support they receive from staff to help them deal with emotional issues.

Learning at your school is fun, which reflects the school motto of 'Learning is fun at Stramongate'. The environment is stimulating and displays show the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of children who attend. Children are quite rightly proud of their school and their behaviour is impeccable. They told me that they enjoyed coming to school and describe their teachers as 'simply the best'. Learning to play a musical instrument such as the keyboard, recorder or clarinet is something pupils really enjoy and appreciate. Others excitedly told me about how you and your staff had provided them with the experience of what it was like attending school during the Second World War. They also enjoy the responsibilities that you give them as elected members of school councils and being involved in the decision making process.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A high priority is put on keeping pupils safe. Staff have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse or neglect and the correct procedures to follow should they have a concern. They are aware that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities. Staff have also completed 'Prevent' duty training and they talk with some confidence about issues such as radicalisation, female genital mutilation and extremism. Those who are responsible for recruitment and safeguarding have completed training at the appropriate level. The building is secure and the identity of visitors to the school is closely checked. Written information on safeguarding is given to visitors on arrival at the school, making them aware of their responsibilities. The single central record is compliant.

Pupils that I met during the inspection told me that they felt safe in school. They are aware of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it can cause. They told me quite emphatically that bullying is rare but if it does happen staff soon sort it out. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe when they are on the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- Self-evaluation is accurate and you recognise what your school has to do to move onwards and upwards. Staff share your vision and these priorities are clearly set out in the school development plan. However, both you and I agree that targets set are not sharp enough or measureable to allow school leaders and your governors to monitor effectively how well the school is doing.
- You keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make. Regular access to training ensures that teaching skills are fresh and up to date.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils attending the school is high. A significant proportion of these pupils have special educational needs and attendance issues. The school has taken effective and concerted action to improve the attendance of

this group which is now broadly in line with the national average. Case studies show that disadvantaged pupils who have special educational needs make good progress taking into consideration their very diverse needs.

- Disadvantaged pupils also make good progress and school records show that the gap between this group of pupils and their classmates is closing. You and I both agree that more work needs to be done to close the gap even further. The recently commissioned external review of how the pupil premium money is spent and the action plan now in place will be helpful to you in this process.
- As a result of swift and effective action taken by you and your staff, the number of children in the early years on track to achieve a good level of development this year has increased to 66%. As a result, a greater number of children are ready for their transition into year 1.
- The number of children achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters make) dropped in 2015. You reacted positively and provided additional training for staff. The regrouping of pupils for phonics lessons now better meets pupils differing needs, including the most able. As a result, the number of children on track to reach the expected standard would mean an increase from 66% in the previous year to 78% in 2016.
- Standards in writing are improving. Pupils are keen writers and we saw some good-quality writing in literacy books across the school and on display. I was particularly impressed by the extended pieces of writing in Year 6 across a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils wrote poems about the life of Anne Frank. However, from looking at books in other year groups we both agree that pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length across the foundation subjects.
- Standards in reading are also rising. Older pupils read to me with fluency and expression. They talk with confidence about the type of books they like and dislike. Younger children read regularly at home and with adults in school. They make good use of their phonics knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. Like their older classmates, they are able to articulate the type of books they prefer to read.
- The roles of the literacy and numeracy coordinators are well embedded and provide you with valuable support in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. However, we agree that the roles of the middle leaders of the foundation subjects are not as well developed.
- You make excellent use of the sports funding to provide pupils with an extensive range of sporting clubs and inter-school competitions which they relish.
- You work collaboratively with local schools and colleges to offer support and challenge to each other. For example, instructors from Kendal College work with your staff and pupils so that they can take part in exciting activities such as canoeing, orienteering, canyoneering and raft building. Such wonderful experiences help develop pupils' life skills and encourage them to work as part of a team.
- Strategies are in place to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged, particularly in phonics and mathematics. Furthermore, those identified as being gifted and talented go to a local secondary school from the beginning of Year 6

for literacy and mathematics lessons.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the gap continues to narrow between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
- that targets in the school development plan are sharp and measurable to enable more effective self-evaluation
- the role of middle leaders of the foundation subjects is embedded further so that they have a greater impact on teaching, learning and assessment
- pupils are provided with more opportunities to write at length across the foundation subjects to raise standards in writing to even higher levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with you and two members of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents, staff and pupils from key stages 1 and 2 to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school with you and visited classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to them read and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents.