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Mr Mustafaa Malik
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Malik

Short inspection of Wardley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 May 2013.

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 taken great care to ensure that a calm, purposeful learning environment is well embedded. High expectations for all pupils are embodied by the positive, 'can-do' culture that you have created. Pupils' rates of attendance are good because pupils thoroughly enjoy school, feel safe and have warm, enabling relationships with staff. In your capable hands, the majority of pupils at Wardley Primary continue to reach nationally expected standards in science, reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages 1 and 2.

The previous inspection challenged you to share good practice in teaching and learning across school and develop excellence in teaching. To this end, senior leaders skilfully monitor and evaluate the quality and consistency of teaching. Teachers are both supported and challenged to hone their skills. Good-quality teaching has therefore been successfully sustained over time. You acknowledge that subject leaders now need further opportunities to contribute more fully to this process, particularly with regard to English.

Recommendations from the previous inspection also urged you to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in writing. You and your teaching staff rose to the challenge. In 2016, pupils' outcomes in writing in key stage 1 were broadly in line with those seen nationally. The proportion of pupils in key stage 2 reaching and exceeding

age-related expectations in writing surpassed national averages. In addition, Year 6 pupils excelled in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling check. You and your senior leadership team, however, show no complacency. Together, you have accurately identified that the progress of some pupils in writing, particularly boys, requires further scrutiny. You recognise the need to sharpen improvement plans in order to communicate more precise and measurable targets for each year group.

A sizable proportion of children enter the school with capabilities below those typical for their age. A calm, enabling early years environment and dedicated staff mean that children's welfare needs are met effectively. Children are happy and settle quickly to well-established routines. Staff work well with parents to prepare children for the social and emotional demands of key stage 1. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development, however, remains below national averages. You have plans afoot to tackle underlying issues in the development of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics that you have correctly identified.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have carefully followed the advice and guidance from Gateshead local authority in undertaking the appropriate checks of staff, making sure of their suitability to work with children. This diligence is helping to minimise risk, keeping pupils safe and free from harm. You ensure that all staff have regular access to the most recent information about child protection. As a result, staff talk competently and with understanding about their duty to protect and care for children.

Pupils feel 'really safe'. They talk knowledgeably about the dangers as well as the benefits of technology. Pupils engage in a range of activities that promote road safety awareness, such as cycle proficiency. Staff explore potential accidents and risks with pupils, such as environmental hazards and the effects of extreme weather. 'Worst case scenario' tasks in relation to fire hazards captured pupils' interests recently and equipped them with essential knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils are thus empowered to manage the world around them more safely.

Inspection findings

- You have communicated your vision for the school and pupils effectively. Your 'good is never good enough' attitude towards the school's performance means that you and your dedicated team are relentless in striving for excellence. Staff value your leadership and share your ambition for all pupils, no matter their starting points. This steadfast, reflective approach to continuous improvement is ensuring that good standards of teaching and learning are maintained over time.
- Teachers support pupils to pick up new concepts and ways of working, quickly and successfully. This is because teachers demonstrate and model their expectations carefully, using explanations that pupils can easily understand. Classrooms are calm, orderly environments, conducive to effective learning. Time is used well to maximise potential opportunities for teaching and learning. Each moment is regarded as precious.
- Subject leaders regularly examine the work that pupils produce. They lead and

partake in training within their areas of responsibility. Skilled and confident, they contribute well to school evaluation and planning. Not all subject leaders, however, have regular opportunities to observe teaching and learning across each key stage. This prevents a fully rounded view of their subject in action and the extent to which all groups of pupils are flourishing.

- Pupils like school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Good attendance is a strength of the school. Pupils described staff as 'phenomenal', saying that adults help them learn and treat them well. They know that adults are looking out for them and will support them if they have any worries or questions. All pupils who spoke with the inspector said school makes them feel extremely safe and 'comfortable'.
- Pupils say that school 'is a nice place to be'. Although there are occasional incidents of poor behaviour, pupils are confident that it is not a big problem. Pupils explain how fairly and effectively incidents are managed by staff, saying, 'grown-ups... sort it out'. Consequently, playtimes are happy affairs. Pupils are well-versed in the forms that bullying can take and understand the effects that bullying may have on others.
- Early years staff work tirelessly to ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. They plan stimulating tasks that build upon children's interests. Crucially, teachers and support staff model expected behaviour and speech consistently. This means children's personal, social and emotional skills, as well as their communication skills, are developed effectively. Some children, however, do not acquire the basic skills in writing, reading and mathematics quickly enough to allow them to catch up with others. This means that although most children make good progress from their starting points, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years remains below the national average over time.
- The majority of parents who offered comments during this inspection have a high regard for staff and hold favourable views of the school's work. One parent's comment encapsulated the views expressed by several: 'staff are dedicated and enthusiastic and will go above and beyond [for] children'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans are sharpened to include more measurable targets for pupils' outcomes in each year group, particularly with regard to boys' writing
- in the early years, basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised and central to improvement planning
- all subject leaders have regular opportunities to observe and make a difference to teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

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

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and subject leaders and managers. I also met with a group of pupils from the school council and a governor. I took account of 23 free-text opinions from parents and 24 parental responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I talked with pupils and staff informally during breaks and in lessons and considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. No pupils responded to the pupil survey. I examined pupils' work and evaluated information about the progress of pupils. I considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and records regarding behaviour and safety. I met with a representative from the local authority. During this inspection, I paid particular attention to the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress, including those in the early years. I also looked closely at standards of writing across key stages and the rates of attendance for groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.