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Dear Mr Wheatley

Short inspection of Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 2012.

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 successfully preserved the warm, welcoming atmosphere of this small school which sits at the heart of its community. Good-quality teaching and learning have been sustained effectively. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school each day and appreciate the broad range of opportunities provided by the varied curriculum that you have embedded. The large majority of parents agree that their children flourish within the positive culture that you have established.

At the previous inspection the school was challenged to raise attainment in literacy, particularly for less-able younger boys, and to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. In response, leaders and governors aptly prioritised these areas in improvement planning and set out to address identified issues swiftly. Improvement is evident. In 2016, for example, more pupils in each key stage attained the higher levels than in previous years.

You have a clear view of the benefits of team working to develop the expertise of your staff. Regular opportunities are provided for staff to refine their skills by working with others who demonstrate good practice. These opportunities not only occur within school but within schools across the partnership.

Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe, and my inspection findings support this view. I observed happy, content and friendly faces throughout the school. Older pupils set a good example to their younger peers through the work they do to organise play activities and the leadership they provide through the school council. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school and look forward to the varied and rich topics that your curriculum provides.

As a small school, your teachers know each pupil very well and adapt their teaching skilfully to meet pupils' individual needs. This is exemplified by the good work you do to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Thorough planning, in consultation with parents, has ensured that pupils' needs are well met, allowing them to thrive and make good progress from their starting points. It was also noticeable how kind and caring pupils are to one another.

Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and use their experience well to ask challenging and pertinent questions of leaders. Effective systems and procedures are in place that allow governors to read reports in good time prior to their meetings. This helps them formulate key questions they wish to ask leaders. Governors recognise the need to keep a closer eye on how well pupils are progressing across the wider curriculum as well as making sure that the school's plans clearly state how opportunities will be provided to challenge further the most able pupils, especially in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders including governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are always at the forefront of their thinking. Frequent child protection training for staff and governors means that all are knowledgeable and up to date in terms of the most recent legislation and guidance. Adults are highly vigilant and are clear about their duties regarding the welfare and protection of pupils. Concerns are logged and records are well maintained. External agencies are used to secure support and specialist advice for vulnerable pupils and families where required.

Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after. They have complete faith that adults in school will listen to them if they are worried or would like to talk. Pupils do not feel that bullying is an issue. They are confident that any rare issues of poorer behaviour or mishaps in the playground will be dealt with fairly and firmly. Pupils' attitudes and behaviours in lessons and during informal times are indicative of the strength of the school's work in this area. Relationships between adults and pupils are enabling and positive.

Inspection findings

- You are ambitious for all pupils at the school. Staff know pupils as individuals. This prompts close attention to the needs and capabilities of each child and leads to highly positive relationships between staff and pupils. Records demonstrate that you are diligent in the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress from their

different starting points in each year group. Teachers are held to account for pupils' outcomes across subjects and pay progression is tied to teachers' performance effectively.

- Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school's work. The broad set of skills and experience that governors bring to the school means that you and other leaders, while supported by a knowledgeable governing body, are also challenged robustly and held to account for the progress of pupils. Governors draw on their extensive expertise in the field of education as well as their breadth of experiences from other backgrounds to contribute effectively to school improvement.
- The majority of pupils are delightfully proud of their school and find it enjoyable. Pupils are considerate of each other as well as adults, and playtimes are cheerful affairs. The environment is secure and well looked after, with an enticing range of opportunities for play and exploration. The manner in which pupils move around the school is calm and lunchtimes are harmonious.
- Outcomes in early years have improved rapidly over time, resulting in the proportion of children attaining a good level of development now being higher than the national picture. Enhancement in both the indoor and outdoor provision, along with leaders working relentlessly to strengthen partnerships with parents, is ensuring that improvements in outcomes are continuing.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Years 1 and 2. Effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Almost all children reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Both the least able and the most able readers make strong progress because they receive regularly the specific help they need and they are provided with books that are appropriate for their level of development.
- The quality of teaching is generally of a high standard. Teachers and support assistants use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning. Teachers explain tasks and new concepts clearly, using demonstrations effectively to support understanding. Pupils' books demonstrate that teachers and pupils share high expectations. Pride in presentation and a commitment to the improving of work are evident. You recognise that further work needs to be done on ensuring that outcomes from the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching by middle leaders inform the school's self-evaluation and the development plan.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an unmistakeable strength of the school. Behaviour and conduct during lessons and outside at playtimes are good. Pupils behave respectfully and with consideration for others. As pupils were preparing to set off for a gymnastic event, many other pupils were extremely encouraging, showing kindness and empathy. The Holocaust Memorial area in the school garden exemplifies a positive regard for others. The whole school demonstrated a cheerful togetherness as they sang their way through a lively assembly in celebration of Christian values. This is a school clearly committed to developing British values and ensuring that pupils

have a happy, stimulating environment in which to learn and grow.

- You ensure that the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is well spent. The amount of progress that disadvantaged pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics across most year groups is similar to that of other pupils.
- In 2016, a higher proportion of pupils than the national average achieved the higher levels in mathematics. In addition, a larger proportion of pupils secured greater depth in reading than nationally. However, those pupils identified as being most able are not making rapid enough progress in writing across most year groups. This is because some of the activities they are asked to carry out are not challenging enough.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this reflects in their good attendance. A very small minority of pupils do not attend as regularly as they should and you have robust systems in place to tackle this. Support for families, individual and tailored to meet their needs, is provided through an independent education welfare officer.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged to reach the higher standards of which they are capable, especially in writing
- the outcomes from the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching by middle leaders inform the school's self-evaluation and the development plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Seagrove
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The key areas I considered during this inspection were the progress and provision of the most able pupils, the attendance of different groups of pupils and the impact that leaders are having on the quality of teaching and learning. During this inspection I met with you to discuss the effectiveness of the school and its leadership and management. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books to consider the progress being made by pupils currently in school. I reviewed school documentation and information, including policies, assessment information,

monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met with six governors, including the chair. I also met your school improvement partner and spoke to groups of pupils. I considered parental responses to the free text response from the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). No staff or pupils responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.