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Mrs Kim Buxton  
Headteacher  
Shirland Primary School  
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Shirland  
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Derbyshire  
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Dear Mrs Buxton

### **Short inspection of Shirland Primary 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 February 2013.

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

Leaders and the governing body have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a thorough and detailed knowledge of the school and this has enabled you to continue to improve many aspects of school life. You have developed a strong leadership team that is steadfastly focused on improving standards for pupils through effective teaching and learning. The governing body carries out its responsibilities diligently. They are working with you to ensure that they maintain a continued focus on improving the quality of education for all pupils.

The pupils I spoke with said that they enjoy school, particularly the extra-curricular activities, visitors and trips that complement the vibrant curriculum. Pupils know that if they have any concerns, staff will deal with these swiftly. Pupils have confidence in the school's staff to support them.

Since the last inspection, the school has made challenge for the most able pupils a whole-school priority. It is evident in pupils' workbooks that teachers are ensuring that these pupils are receiving sufficient challenge, particularly in mathematics. Teachers give pupils opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding through learning activities that emphasise the development of technical and conceptual understanding.

In 2015, pupils in key stage 1 made slightly faster progress in reading, writing and

mathematics than the national average. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was above the national average. Similarly, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing and mathematics was above the national average.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to focus on planning regular opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. The school has tackled this through its interesting and varied curriculum. Teachers have carefully planned more opportunities for pupils to practise key mathematical skills. For example, pupils used tally charts linked to the most popular Mexican food in a history topic, and Venn diagrams to represent animals that live in the polar regions of the Arctic and Antarctic in a geography lesson. This is helping pupils to reinforce their mathematical skills and understand that mathematics is not a discrete subject but features across the curriculum. In 2016, pupils, including those who were disadvantaged, had made progress in mathematics in line with national averages.

Leaders introduced a phonics programme shortly before the previous inspection. This has now had time to be fully implemented. Consequently, in 2016, the overall proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 increased, and was in line with the national average.

You have introduced grammar, punctuation and spelling lessons that are taught daily across the school. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or greater depth was above the national average in this area. It is clear from pupils' workbooks that these lessons are having a positive impact on pupils' writing skills throughout the school. In 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in writing was above the national average.

You have introduced a reading programme that motivates pupils to read and increases their comprehension skills. In 2016, the proportion of pupils overall achieving the expected and greater depth at the end of key stage 1 in reading was above the national average. However, there was a slight slowing of progress in reading in 2016, and you recognise that pupils had not made fast enough progress by the time they reached the end of key stage 2. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils who are not currently making enough progress in reading, compared with others nationally. You have created a thorough plan for improvement in this area that is having a clear impact. For example, every day, an early morning club provides a range of activities so that pupils in the early years and key stage 1 can reinforce their phonics and reading skills. The team leader who ably leads the club monitors pupils' progress closely. The team leader also provides customised learning for disadvantaged pupils in classes, where she works alongside them in their daily lessons. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading has begun to improve, but it is not yet rapid, nor consistent across the school.

You agree that the performance of disadvantaged pupils in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is also an area for improvement. You are tackling this

through carefully monitoring the use of the additional funding for these pupils to ensure that it is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress and attainment.

Leaders and teachers are adept at monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning but you rightly recognise that teachers are not yet using the school's tracking system fully to complement their assessment activities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have excellent partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies. This has helped to ensure that pupils are supported and kept safe. Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date and governors make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices. Staff know precisely what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern and have all of the information and guidance they need to provide excellent support for pupils in their care.

High-quality, detailed records show that you manage concerns swiftly and understand the procedures for referring pupils where there is a concern. You are prompt and vigilant in garnering further support by approaching the appropriate external agency.

Pupils feel safe at the school and are confident that staff will deal with their concerns quickly. They know precisely how the school keeps them safe, through site security and requiring visitors to sign in on arrival at the school. Pupils said bullying is rare and they feel assured teachers will deal with any friendship disagreements promptly. You have provided pupils with opportunities to learn about fire safety and have implemented a peer listening programme in Year 6 to support other pupils on the playground, should they have any friendship concerns.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and other members of staff have created a supportive and caring environment where every pupil is valued. The pupils know that they can 'be the best they can be' because you provide a broad range of opportunities and enrichment activities that support their development. Pupils are keen to work hard and improve themselves. Behaviour and conduct around school are extremely positive. Staff continually praise pupils for trying their best.
- The governing body provides effective support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and know what needs to be done so that all pupils receive the best provision possible. The governing body regularly checks on the work of the school, particularly finding out about the impact of the school's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are aware that reading is also a priority for the school.
- Most pupils make good progress across the curriculum. You have created a vibrant and innovative curriculum that sustains pupils' interests. You have established 'WOW' days and 'theme' weeks so that pupils develop a broad understanding of the world around them. For example, pupils particularly enjoyed

the school's 'Democracy Week', where they had the opportunity to vote and interview a prominent local member of parliament. Pupils also enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to NASA's space research through growing seeds that have journeyed through space. Pupils are highly focused, enthusiastic and engaged in their learning.

- Leaders check how well pupils are learning. Your attention to detail has ensured that you identify weaknesses and bring in improvements to help pupils make better progress. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan high-quality learning. You have regularly evaluated the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that the school's key priorities are being tackled robustly.
- Phonics teaching is effective, and this is reflected in pupils' good reading skills. Teachers provide fun activities so that pupils can practise their sounds and use them effectively in their reading activities. Overall standards in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2016 were above the national average.
- Pupils who read to me said that they enjoy reading. The most able pupils read confidently and enthusiastically name their favourite authors. They read with expression and show good understanding of the text. Disadvantaged pupils read increasingly well and apply their phonics skills effectively. Younger pupils are able to use their phonics skills and blend sounds to make whole words. Low-attaining readers show perseverance with their reading and again use their phonics skills appropriately.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers become more adept at using the school's tracking system so that it supports their assessment of pupils' learning
- leaders use pupil premium funding to increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who pass the phonics screening check in Year 1 and ensure that these pupils make faster progress in reading by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, who is also responsible for safeguarding, and other senior leaders. I also had a meeting with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I visited a series of lessons with the headteacher. I examined samples of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their work. I spoke with pupils informally during breaktime and lessons, and formally during an interview. I also listened to pupils read and looked at their reading records. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at the start of the day, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and I took account of 30 responses to the Ofsted free-text service, 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 9 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, including the single central record, behaviour policies, the latest achievement information for the school, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, records of meetings of the governing body and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.