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Mr Gavin Storey  
Headteacher  
Cullercoats Primary School  
Marden Avenue  
Cullercoats  
North Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE30 4PB

Dear Mr Storey

### **Short inspection of Cullercoats Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 April 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 acted quickly to improve the quality of teaching at key stage 1 following the previous inspection. As a result of your actions, pupils have made better progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attained standards that have consistently compared favourably with national averages. You have also maintained the quality of teaching across key stage 2 and ensured that older pupils have also continued to attain standards well above those seen nationally. The relatively small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, also attain standards above those of other pupils nationally. You and your staff are embracing the raised expectations of the national curriculum. You have improved the teaching of phonics and, more recently, your initiative to strengthen the quality of pupils' writing has begun to deliver impressive results. However, you recognise further work is required to develop the teaching of mathematics, so that more pupils develop a firm understanding of key concepts and can confidently apply their knowledge in different contexts.

The school feels busy, vibrant and welcoming and the pupils are polite and respectful of one another. Older pupils who are members of the 'CHEW Crew' are trained to provide support and friendship for younger pupils at social times. Others help out in the dining hall at lunchtime or serve on the school council. Pupils and

parents and carers who made their views known to me all feel the school provides a safe environment and that the curriculum provides pupils with clear guidance on how to stay safe in different situations, such as when using the internet. Pupils do say that bullying happens occasionally, but almost everyone is confident members of staff will deal with it quickly. Overall levels of attendance are above the national average, but this masks the poorer attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which has remained stubbornly below that of others in the school and shows no immediate sign of improvement.

Pupils benefit from a rich and varied curriculum beyond the core of English and mathematics. There are many interesting and engaging science topics taught that utilise the school's location and natural surroundings to stimulate pupils' curiosity. Portfolios of work reveal the breadth of opportunities for pupils to draw, paint and create sculpture. The school also gives sport a high priority and has a strong track-record of success in inter-school competitions.

You and your governors use assessment information well to inform your accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, you know where to focus your efforts and the leadership team demonstrates the skills and capacity to sustain strong outcomes for pupils. Although most members of staff and most parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire feel the school is well led and managed, a small minority noted some aspects of leadership could be sharper. For example, some parts of the school are untidy, some members of staff do not dress professionally and some parents feel the quality of communication between school and home could be better. Details such as these currently undermine the drive for excellence and ambitious culture the governors are keen to promote.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the governors are vigilant in your duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You make rigorous checks on the suitability of all members of staff and other adults who work in the school. You have recently updated your safeguarding policy and have provided appropriate training for members of staff. Key safeguarding information is prominently displayed around the school. A thorough safeguarding audit has been conducted and you and the governors have reflected thoughtfully on the actions you will take to ensure that a culture of continuous vigilance is maintained. You keep detailed records and act quickly when a concern about a child's safety or welfare is referred to you. In addition, you make good use of the advice and support of external partners.

### **Inspection findings**

- On average, children enter Reception with skills that are typical for their age. Their progress is carefully assessed and recorded in ways that are easily shared with parents. These assessments are used to inform the varied and stimulating activities that are provided to support children's development. Children quickly learn to play sociably with one another and to follow routines in the busy Reception classrooms and outdoor area. Teachers take every opportunity to

support children's language development and provide good support to establish reading, writing and number skills. Careful thought has gone into ensuring that activities appeal equally to boys and girls and that additional funding for disadvantaged children is used for their benefit. Last year, the proportion of children who attained a good level of development was well above the national average.

- In 2016, almost all pupils in Year 1 reached the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. However, outcomes at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics dipped to be only broadly average, as teachers adapted to the more challenging expectations of the national curriculum. An initiative to improve the teaching of writing has begun to have a positive impact. Pupils enjoy building up stories through drawings and repeatedly telling their stories orally to one another. As a result, they write with increasing fluency and freedom when they put pencil to paper. Pupils in Year 2 now write at length and with confidence, applying their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively. Pupils who make slower progress receive good additional support that helps them to catch up. Disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 1 are making progress in line with their peers.
- Outcomes in mathematics have, over recent years, been a strength of the school. However, current assessment information and the work in pupils' books shows the teaching of mathematics has not developed enough to fully meet the raised aspirations of the national curriculum. Although pupils continue to develop fluency in basic mathematical skills, they do not get enough opportunities to apply their knowledge to problems. Furthermore, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough and struggle to articulate their thinking.
- Most pupils enjoy being at the school. This is reflected in the high and improving level of overall attendance. You have good systems in place to check the reasons for absences and you challenge the parents of pupils who regularly miss school. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is well below that of other pupils and risks becoming a barrier to their progress and attainment. Current attendance information shows this continues to be a concern. Further thought needs to be given to addressing this issue.
- Leaders and governors review policies and procedures regularly and ensure that statutory requirements are met. However, at the time of this inspection, the school website was being redeveloped and did not meet the requirements on the publication of specified information. The child protection policy was out of date, key stage 2 test results were not available and the special educational needs information report was missing. These oversights were quickly addressed during the inspection. The governors are ambitious for the school and have effective systems in place to challenge leaders and hold them to account. Governors regularly call leaders to attend committee meetings where they scrutinise the impact of their work. The governors have advanced plans in place to open Nursery provision from September 2017 and have stepped in to sustain a breakfast and after-school facility, following the closure of the private provision that was until recently based at the school.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make rapid and sustained progress in mathematics by
  - making sure pupils are regularly challenged to reason and explain their thinking
  - providing frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to mathematical problems
- they work more closely with families to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so that it more closely matches that of other pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and a group of governors including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with pupils both formally and informally during social times and in lessons. We visited a number of lessons across the Reception classes and key stages 1 and 2. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, assessment information, attendance data and safeguarding arrangements. I also reviewed information on the school's website, which is currently being redeveloped. The deputy headteacher and subject leaders for literacy and mathematics scrutinised some pupils' books with me. I also took into account the views of pupils, members of staff and parents through their responses to questionnaires.