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Mrs Louise Wells  
Headteacher  
Battle Hill Primary School  
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NE28 9DH

Dear Mrs Wells

### **Short inspection of Battle Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 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.

Since becoming headteacher, you have ensured that the school is a warm, friendly and caring community in which pupils develop both socially and academically. The curriculum provides a breadth of opportunities for pupils to develop culturally, through music, dance and foreign trips, and well-planned links with local places of worship foster pupils' spirituality effectively. Pupils are caring of one another and welcome new pupils into the school, including those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils told me bullying is rare and, when it does happen, they trust members of staff to deal with it quickly. While pupils clearly enjoy coming to school, levels of attendance remain stubbornly below the national average, despite your concerted efforts. You and your governors know the poor attendance of some groups of pupils remains a key issue to address.

You have acted decisively to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Well-focused training has helped to secure strong teaching across the school. Pupils are motivated to write because topics fire their imagination, and well-structured discussions help them to talk through their ideas before putting pen to paper. In addition, the teaching of mathematics is improving because teachers have increased their level of challenge and provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to mathematical problems. The

appointment of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher has brought more capacity to leadership and management. Middle leaders now demonstrate the necessary skills and ambition to challenge colleagues and raise standards.

Your clear vision, accurate evaluation and clarity of planning have ensured that outcomes in the school have improved. Parents are very praising of the positive start their children make in the early years. Good leadership of the Nursery and Reception has steadily increased the proportion of children attaining a good level of development, which rose above the national average in 2016. Progress and attainment in key stage 1 has been more variable over time. Almost all pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2, although last year, some of the most able pupils made less progress than they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Strong progress across key stage 2, particularly in mathematics, ensures that pupils reach levels of attainment above the national average by the time they leave the school. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made similar progress to their peers in the school and attained standards in line with other pupils nationally.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the governors are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. You ensure that rigorous checks are made on all adults who work in or visit the school. Child protection policies are reviewed regularly and up-to-date training is provided for all members of staff. As the school's designated safeguarding leader, you give considerable time to working with external partners to ensure that your most vulnerable pupils are protected from harm. In particular, the progress of children who are looked after by the local authority is carefully monitored. Governors are knowledgeable about their responsibilities and ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are audited annually.

### **Inspection findings**

- Parents report that the early years staff 'are prepared to go the extra mile' and they are delighted by the individual support their children receive. Teachers and other adults are skilled in assessing children's level of development and designing activities that promote their development. There are good arrangements in place to develop children's speech and language, and effective teaching helps children to secure a sound grasp of phonics and numbers. Good communication and strong partnerships with parents are notable features of the provision. Children quickly learn to play sociably and their curiosity is aroused by engaging activities and stimulating resources. Outcomes at the end of the early years have improved year on year, as leaders have raised expectations and sharpened the quality of teaching. Provision for two-year-olds fully meets statutory welfare requirements and is of good quality. Leaders have ambitious plans to further develop the early years so that provision for the youngest children is more seamlessly integrated

with the Nursery and Reception.

- In 2016, the overall proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics dipped below that seen nationally, because some of the most able pupils did not make enough progress. You have analysed why this was and consequently introduced more challenge into the teaching of writing and mathematics. Together we observed a mathematics lesson in which pupils made strong progress when challenged to explain their thinking and consider alternative approaches to calculation. You also group pupils carefully for phonics lessons to ensure that the right level of challenge is provided. Pupils are heard to read more frequently. More ambitious targets have been set and the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is being very carefully checked. Additional support is being provided for any pupil who falls behind. Your most recent assessment information indicates that more pupils are on track to attain both the expected and higher standard in 2017. Governors know outcomes at the end of the early years have risen over recent years and are checking carefully to see whether this good start is being fully sustained for all pupils across key stage 1.
- You make every effort to impress upon pupils and their families the importance of good attendance. Displays around school encourage high attendance and assemblies regularly celebrate and reward those pupils who attend well. Members of staff telephone the parents of absent pupils on a daily basis and you provide a breakfast club, which helps some children to attend school regularly and punctually. Nevertheless, the level of attendance has remained slightly below the national average and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils needs to improve. Over the past year, you have taken an increasingly firm line. You require the parents of persistently absent pupils to meet with you and you have prosecuted those families that do not cooperate and improve their child's attendance. These approaches are yet to have a decisive impact, although there are some signs that attendance for some groups of pupils is improving.
- The strengthened leadership team is now better placed to check the quality of teaching and identify where improvements can be made. In addition, middle leaders are skilled in checking the quality and impact of teaching. For example, they are adept at reviewing the work in pupils' books to see if they are making the progress they should. Consequently, the guidance they provide for teachers and support staff is helping them to refine their practice. Middle leaders have also provided helpful training and demonstrations of new approaches to the teaching of mathematics, which are becoming established across the school.
- The governing body strikes an effective balance between supporting leaders and holding them to account. New governors with appropriate professional experience have brought more rigour to the checks governors make. Governors ensure that you and your staff are held tightly to account through the setting of challenging objectives. Governors have also promoted strong links with other primary schools and the local secondary school. As a result, transition arrangements to the next phase of education are well developed.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make strong and sustained progress across key stage 1, so that they build effectively on the good start they make in the early years
- attendance improves, particularly the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, so that it is at least in line with levels of attendance seen nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner 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, the deputy headteacher and other 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. You and I visited a number of lessons and the deputy headteacher accompanied me on some briefer visits to classrooms in key stage 2. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, assessment information, attendance data and safeguarding practice. I also reviewed information on the school's website. The deputy headteacher and the subject leader for 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.