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Mr Andrew Waterfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Waterfield

Short inspection of Pegswood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 June 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 brought stability and sustained focus over a period of considerable change since the last inspection, including a new leadership team and the major transition from a first school to a primary school. With your deputy headteacher, you have developed a culture of high expectations that is shared by staff and governors. Heightened opportunities for professional development and an enhanced learning environment have enriched learning opportunities for children and contributed to improving outcomes over time. Pupils value the academic and emotional support they receive from their teachers, which enables them to make progress in their learning and develop as young people.

You and your teachers have responded positively to the heightened demands of the new national curriculum. You have built increasing opportunities for progression between phases in your transition from a first school to a primary school. Creative planning, deft assessment and a stimulating learning environment have led to positive outcomes in the early years. At key stage 1, the majority of pupils achieved outcomes that were above those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, representing good progress from starting points. However, progress across year groups is less consistent in mathematics.

With governors' support, you had the foresight to appoint an experienced Year 6 teacher in September 2016 to support your first class of Year 6 pupils. Early evidence suggests that they are making encouraging progress in meeting more challenging assessment demands.

You and your team are committed to promoting the wider development of pupils. The focus upon literacy and numeracy is complemented by a commitment to the wider curriculum. Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop their knowledge of science through research and practical experiments, contributing to outcomes above those seen nationally. Curriculum coverage in subjects such as history, geography and religious studies has a genuine breadth. Pupils have extensive opportunities to participate in a range of sports, including football, gymnastics, curling and dance. Participation rates are high, contributing to the school's award of Sportsmark gold status for a third successive year. Significant proportions of pupils take part in a diverse range of extra-curricular clubs, including code club, journalism, cooking and mini-band. A specific mathematics club for girls has complemented classroom strategies in improving their progress across the majority of year groups. Pupils appreciate the rich variety of experiences on offer. With governors' encouragement, you have greatly enhanced the environment and use of outdoor spaces, enabling pupils to explore the natural environment in their learning.

You have given your wider teaching team responsibilities for monitoring standards in subjects and phases. Staff morale is high and teachers value their professional development. They are developing increasing accuracy in their assessment practices as a result of regular moderation within and beyond the Ashington partnership of schools. External consultants have been invited to further monitor standards and develop expertise. You have modified tracking systems to give a clearer picture of pupils' progress over time. While these systems are developing, leaders and governors do not always use them to gain a clear and timely picture of the progress of particular groups of pupils. Progress monitoring and performance management procedures encourage teachers to reflect upon their practice. However, there remains a need to sustain long-term improvement by further extending leadership responsibilities, particularly at key stage 2, in order to share good practice and closely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

Your team is committed to the personal and social development of pupils. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been enhanced through improved identification of pupils' needs. You work closely with parents and external agencies to provide social and emotional support that helps to overcome barriers to learning. You have introduced a specific initiative to help pupils in coping with loss and bereavement. Parents are welcomed to the school through a range of open mornings and family learning opportunities. You and your governors are rightly proud of the central place the school holds in the community. However, more needs to be done to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils by building ever stronger links with families.

Governors are committed to the success of the school and believe passionately in the central position it holds in the community. The vast majority of parents hold the school in high esteem. Governors are developing more focused monitoring responsibilities, including shared observations of pupils working across the school to check leaders' views of standards. Governors review the use of funding closely and increasingly seek evidence of the impact of staffing appointments and funding on the learning environment and upon pupils' outcomes and experiences. Governors embrace training opportunities to develop their own understanding of key issues, including pupils' progress and safeguarding. Such training and support will need to continue to further increase governors' capacity to independently hold leaders to account, particularly given the transition to a full primary school and the increasing demands at key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. They maintain a continual focus on pupils' welfare that is shared by all staff across the school. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults working at the school. Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' well-being robustly and maintain positive links with external agencies to further support pupils' welfare. Staff and governors actively seek and receive up-to-date training on a wide range of key safeguarding issues. Pupils feel safe and well supported in school and their parents agree. In conversation, pupils said that bullying did not happen at school and, if it did, they were confident that teachers and other adults would effectively address this. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe on the road and online.

Inspection findings

- You and your team have sustained high expectations and built increasing rigour into teaching, learning and assessment. In the 2016 national tests at the end of key stage 1, a higher proportion of pupils met or exceeded expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science than seen nationally. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth was smaller than the national figure.
- Teaching is typically good across the curriculum. Teachers demonstrate good subject expertise and are building increasing complexity to respond to the additional challenges at key stage 2. Teachers foster positive learning behaviours in pupils, who sustain concentration and cooperate effectively in group tasks. However, more needs to be done to enable increasing proportions of pupils to work at greater depth.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively to develop pupils' phonics skills and this has contributed to pupils achieving levels in phonics checks consistently above those seen nationally over a three-year period. Pupils read well and with understanding, although some of the wider reading choices of Year 6 pupils lack challenge.

- Pupils are making good progress in writing as a result of good teaching and effective assessment. They have numerous opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. Their progress in reading is also good, although their vocabulary and skills of inference and deduction require further development to enable them to work at greater depth. While there is evidence of increasing challenge supporting good progress in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, curriculum opportunities need to be enhanced more fully in Years 3 and 4 in order to accelerate pupils' rates of progress.
- Pupils make good progress in science and in foundation subjects including history and geography. Their books show extensive coverage of the curriculum and frequent opportunities to deepen understanding through practical experiments and research tasks.
- As a result of effective planning, careful assessment and the creative use of indoor and outdoor spaces, children make good progress in the early years. Children show good concentration in teacher-led tasks, whether they are reading, writing or cooking pancakes and also show enthusiasm and curiosity in more open activities. In 2016, children achieved levels of development above those seen nationally.
- Teachers track pupils' progress formally on a termly basis, although discussions on progress take place more frequently at regular staff meetings. On occasions, tracking systems do not show the progress of groups of pupils promptly enough to inform interventions. The majority of teachers provide written and verbal feedback in line with the school's policy that supports pupils in making good progress.
- Pupils show considerable pride in their work and in their school community. They conduct themselves in a friendly and orderly manner around the site. External partners regularly take time in cards and letters to write about the exceptionally positive behaviour and attitude pupils display on school trips and community projects. Pupils are active members of the school community and the vast majority participate in the many and varied extra-curricular activities. The school has held the Sportsmark gold award for three consecutive years for pupils' extensive involvement in a range of sports. Pupils commit to the local community by planting bulbs, delivering hampers and raising money for a range of charities.
- Leaders have instigated a number of strategies to improve attendance. They have worked with external partners, including the education welfare officer, to build stronger links with families through the use of early help assessments. In addition, new incentives and rewards are motivating pupils to attend more regularly. As a result, current rates of attendance are improving for all pupils and are on course to be broadly in line with those seen nationally. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has not improved at the same rate and they remain more likely to be absent or persistently absent; more needs to be done to improve their attendance.

- Leaders carefully diagnose the requirements of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Close links exist with external agencies to provide additional support for specific needs, such as speech and language and social and emotional development. Leaders actively use early help assessments to bring different partners together and furnish cohesive support. As a result of these strategies, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good rates of progress across a range of year groups.
- The overall progress of disadvantaged pupils is good, despite some variance. In the early years in 2016, a smaller proportion of children achieved a good level of development than seen nationally, although in the previous year disadvantaged pupils outperformed other pupils. Over time, their outcomes in the phonics screening check have been above those of other pupils nationally. At key stage 1 in 2016, disadvantaged pupils made better progress than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and science but slightly weaker progress in mathematics. Current progress shows that differences are continuing to diminish, although more needs to be done to increase the proportions of disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth. The vast majority of most-able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, achieved levels of greater depth above those seen nationally at key stage 1 in 2016. They continue to make good progress across the majority of year groups, despite some variance in mathematics and in Year 5.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- intensify actions to reduce levels of absence for disadvantaged pupils and further diminish differences in their achievement, particularly in the proportions working at greater depth
- strengthen the quality of mathematics teaching and the curriculum to improve pupils' progress at key stages 1 and 2
- sustain long-term improvement by building leadership capacity across the school to respond to the increased demands of key stage 2 and by using tracking information more assiduously to track progress and address any possible underachievement
- further develop governors' training and sharpen their monitoring skills to give them greater autonomy in holding leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher. I also spoke to seven members of the governing body, including the vice chair. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I also talked to the school improvement partner from the local authority. I undertook a tour of the school with you and your deputy headteacher to observe pupils' learning in process. I also looked at pupils' work in books and folders. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking data. I examined safeguarding documents, including the record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. I took into account 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 26 free-text responses. I also took into account 36 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.