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Mrs Heather Shaw  
Headteacher  
Shotton Primary School  
Grange Terrace  
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County Durham  
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Dear Mrs Shaw

### **Short inspection of Shotton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 March 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following weaker outcomes in some areas in 2015 national tests and assessments, you have successfully instigated many necessary changes. You initially implemented these last academic year and you have rigorously ensured that these changes are even more far-reaching. Consequently, in 2016 key stage 2 national tests and assessments, pupils' outcomes improved, and are set to improve further in all subjects this academic year. In particular, pupils' achievement was above average in reading and writing in key stage 2 tests. You have instilled staff with confidence, drive and ambition. They, like you, are determined to improve the school further.

Your analysis of what the school needs to do next is accurate and well prioritised. You are wisely focusing on developing mathematics because pupils' achievement in this subject in national assessments was not as strong as in writing and reading. In addition, although a higher than average proportion of pupils reached the expected standards in key stage 2 tests, the proportion achieving higher standards was below average in both key stages. You are, therefore, astutely concentrating on improving this by ensuring all teaching is sufficiently stretching.

You have appointed a number of new teachers, some of whom are more experienced than others. You recognise that some teachers will need further development in order to make a deeper contribution to improving the school. You are developing their skills successfully by enabling more experienced teachers to

work alongside them and through effective coaching and mentoring. You have successfully directed both subject and senior leaders, so that the changes they make have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. You sensibly check that this is the case through rigorous and well-planned monitoring activities. Your checks to date also indicate that recommendations from your previous inspection report have been fully implemented. By working effectively with leaders and teachers, you have provided pupils with more opportunities in lessons to work independently and together in activities which allow them to apply and to develop their basic skills across subjects.

Governance is developing well since a recent review of governance made recommendations which have been taken on board. Governors are now clearer about their role in holding the school to account. In particular, governors have placed greater emphasis on supporting and challenging the school, for example to improve standards in mathematics. The governing body has robustly challenged the school's leaders to increase the proportion of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, reaching higher standards in national tests and assessments. Governors have sensibly taken expert and external advice and training to support them in holding leaders to account for improvements in these areas. Prior to the inspection there were a number of omissions from the school's website. These were corrected on the day of the inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that staff are fully trained, including in their duty to ensure pupils are protected from radicalisation, and that policies and procedures are fit for purpose. You make sure that rigorous vetting procedures are followed for all adults that work in the school. You also act quickly and decisively to protect children when necessary. You have a secure knowledge that staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and all staff are aware of the latest government guidance.

You have ensured all safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. Of note is your insistence that staff record and report all concerns, no matter how small. This is so that you can piece together as full a picture as possible of each pupil, and where appropriate make links between concerns. You rightly ask for guidance from the local authority in deciding whether concerns reach the threshold for a referral to social services. You sensibly ensure additional support for children and their families, working in close partnership with a range of providers.

### **Inspection findings**

- You, your staff and your governors are ambitious for all pupils at the school. Together you know the strengths and areas to develop very well and recognise what needs to be done to improve the work of the school. For example, you recognise that pupils make good progress from starting points which are often well below average, and by the time they leave school the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards exceeds the national average in reading and

writing. You have also identified that boys do not achieve as well as girls and that disadvantaged pupils, despite making good and sometimes outstanding progress, do not attain as highly as non-disadvantaged pupils. You wisely included these areas for development in your school improvement plan and teachers have instigated numerous actions to diminish these differences.

- You correctly identified that the proportion reaching expected standards in mathematics was below average, and the proportion working at greater depth was below average in a number of subjects. Improving this is a focus for the school. You now have strong plans in place to ensure all teaching provides opportunities for pupils to apply skills and learn topics in greater depth. Predictions based on current assessments indicate that the proportion achieving greater depth will be well above 2016 averages in 2017 tests.
- You and your staff have successfully improved provision in mathematics and this is leading to higher standards and rapid progress. In mathematics lessons, pupils enjoy the challenge of the daily arithmetic tasks. This is because they can see the progress they are making as their fluency improves and they are able to identify and remedy any gaps in their knowledge.
- In most classes there is growing evidence of effective problem solving in mathematics. These activities are deepening the understanding of number as well as developing the thinking skills of the most able pupils. Occasionally, however, teachers do not check that pupils have fully understood their work. This is because the method has not been explained or modelled well enough by the teacher, and also because pupils are not always encouraged to use resources to help them see what they have to do. Occasionally, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' presentation of their work.
- Through highly focused individualised and group work, based on accurate assessments and changes in class organisation, disadvantaged pupils are now making rapid progress in all year groups. In addition, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs identified and tackled swiftly so they can start to catch up with others in their class effectively.
- Despite a relatively high number of exclusions last year, it is clear that you only used this final sanction as a last resort and for very serious incidents. Following close scrutiny of the robust behaviour log, it is understandable why the fixed-term exclusions were necessary for aggressive behaviour by a small number of pupils. Pupils generally behave very well and exhibit a real zest and joy for learning. Where pupils need more support to respond positively to learning they are provided with what they need. This includes support from external agencies where necessary.
- Pupils are very respectful of their teachers and of one another. Older pupils act as good role models through their various leadership activities and the care that they show towards younger pupils. Most pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school and attend well. However, despite the school's rigorous routines and procedures, a small number of parents do not send their children to school regularly enough. School staff make calls to home on the first day of absence if no reason has been received and they robustly follow up the calls with home visits and calls to other agencies if necessary.

- Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on how well looked after they are, and how safe they feel. They told me how much safer they feel now there is a fence around the school and there are locks on doors.
- The school's work to promote fundamental British values is very effective. Pupils have a good knowledge of democracy through their democratic elections for different pupil committees such as house captains and school council representatives. Respect and tolerance are key values which are taught, experienced and shared every day at this school. Despite a clear equality policy not being on the website prior to the inspection, leaders have been very successful in promoting equality of opportunity and diversity, resulting in a positive school culture and a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils know that all should be treated equally. One pupil summed up the view of many when she recalled a class display which states 'Every child is a flower, and all together make the world a beautiful garden.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- A greater proportion of pupils make consistently good or outstanding progress in their learning by:
  - teachers making better use of resources and providing effective modelling of strategies in order to improve pupils' understanding, knowledge and skills
  - ensuring that all staff have consistently high expectations regarding pupils' presentation of their work.
- Attendance levels improve rapidly, and especially reduce the level of persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Bywater  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited a number of classrooms across school and outdoor spaces to look at pupils' work and talk to them about their learning. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me on these visits. I looked at a sample of books from pupils across the school and listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I met with a group of pupils and observed their behaviour throughout the day. Meetings were held with senior leaders, the designated safeguarding lead and a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation,

including the school's own evaluation of its work and the school development plan, safeguarding and child protection records, risk assessments and the school's assessment information. I took into account the views of 19 parents who had responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with a number of parents at the end of the school day. I also took account of text messages from parents and analysed the survey responses from 19 pupils and seven members of staff.