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Mrs Clare Carr
Headteacher
Frosterley Primary School
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Dear Mrs Carr

Short inspection of Frosterley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 June 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Over time, previous leaders have developed the quality of teaching and taken decisive action where teaching fell short of expectations. Following the recommendation from the previous inspection, improvements have been made to the quality of pupils' writing and the work in pupils' books shows they take considerable care and pride in their work. Since your recent appointment as executive headteacher, you and your deputy have provided clear guidance and training for teachers that have sharpened their practice further. You value their professionalism and have raised their expectations. Sharper use of assessment has already helped teachers to understand better the standards that pupils need to reach to attain the higher levels at the end of each key stage.

Your appointment in January 2017 as executive headteacher across Woodland School and Frosterley Primary represents a new approach by the governing body. Careful advice was taken from the local authority and due consideration was given to the school's financial position before making the decision to adopt a different leadership model. Although still at an early stage, a number of benefits are already emerging. The school has been able to set a balanced budget for the current financial year and some joint training and development work is being undertaken by staff in both schools. The strengths of the assessment systems used at Woodland School are now established at Frosterley Primary, and this is helping teachers to

plan for the different needs of pupils more effectively. Nevertheless, the focus you have placed on accelerating the progress pupils make in core subjects is yet to show a full impact. Your current assessment information and the work in books indicate that few pupils will reach the higher standard in reading, writing or mathematics this year. Ensuring that teachers challenge and stretch the most able pupils consistently remains a priority for the school.

The leadership that you and your deputy are providing has been warmly received by parents and members of staff. Parents feel that you are both visible, approachable and keen to engage with the community. Members of staff feel valued and welcome the additional responsibilities they have been charged with leading. Your accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning have ensured that everyone knows the school's priorities and staff are working as a team to achieve them.

Safeguarding is effective.

Immediately on arrival in the school, you undertook a thorough audit of safeguarding arrangements. A new safeguarding policy has been introduced, in line with the latest government guidance, and all members of staff have received appropriate training. Governors also actively review safeguarding arrangements to check they are effective. You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are robust on days when you are not in the school. You maintain good records and work effectively with other agencies when action needs to be taken to protect a child.

You have also appointed a member of staff to strengthen e-safety arrangements and have joined a programme to develop the skills of pupils in keeping themselves safe when online. Expert pupils now teach others about how to stay safe online, reflecting the caring family approach typical of the school.

Inspection findings

- As a small school, members of staff know each pupil very well and adapt their teaching to meet their identified needs and personalities. As a result, an above-average proportion of children in the Nursery and Reception classes and across the school enjoy learning, make good progress and attain expected standards by the end of their primary education. The few disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others in the school. They attain standards close to those of other pupils nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. However, few pupils reach the higher standard by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. I looked closely at the actions you are taking to address this in this inspection.
- Under your direction, teachers now plan lessons that are more challenging. They set pupils 'challenges' at different levels and have activities ready to extend those pupils who demonstrate a secure level of understanding. Increasingly, these 'challenges' require pupils to solve tricky problems in mathematics or use high-order vocabulary to add deeper colour and meaning to their writing. Teachers have a better knowledge of national curriculum expectations and consequently

plan more astutely. Your more rigorous analysis of assessment information also means that you act more quickly to provide pupils with additional support if they fall behind. However, these changes are at an early stage and need to be applied consistently so that more pupils, especially the most able, reach the higher standard by the end of key stage 2.

- Teachers have begun to benefit from the clear guidance you are providing. They are making better use of the school's tracking system and have begun to use it to analyse pupils' progress more systematically. They regularly attend local authority network meetings and have had good opportunities to work with local authority colleagues to review the work in pupils' books and learn lessons. Subject leaders of both English and mathematics are providing effective leadership for their colleagues. They provide good teaching resources and give helpful feedback, which is helping to ensure that teaching is pitched appropriately for pupils of different abilities.
- I also looked closely at the breadth of the curriculum and found it to be wide-ranging and adapted flexibly to make learning relevant and real. The teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is well supplemented by themed weeks which foster pupils' curiosity and enquiry skills. Rich displays in corridors and classrooms promote a love of reading and number skills. During my visit, pupils of all ages were excited and engaged by science. They talked to me about the diversity of life they had found in local ponds and their growing understanding of food chains. More widely, pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through a cultural visit to London and through events such as multi-faith workshops at Durham Cathedral. In school, it was evident that pupils are taught to care for and respect one another. They take on leadership responsibilities, such as 'play leaders' or 'playground buddies', and support others suffering hardship through their work in collecting food for a local food bank.
- Behaviour in school is excellent. Children are polite and friendly and apply themselves well in lessons. High levels of attendance show that pupils are happy to come to school. Consequently, very few pupils miss school regularly.
- Lots of books are available, both indoors and outdoors, in the early years areas which encourage children to stop and read spontaneously. Pupils read confidently and can draw upon their understanding of phonics when they encounter new words. Corners of the school are used by volunteers and teaching assistants to hear individual pupils read each day.
- Members of the governing body provide effective strategic leadership. They are monitoring carefully the impact of the new leadership arrangements and checking the school's finances thoroughly. They know the school well through their regular visits and the detailed reports they receive. Governors are, however, less clear about the detail of how well pupils are progressing and need to scrutinise the school's assessment information more carefully across the year in order to hold leaders to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils make rapid progress and attain the higher standard by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics
- governors provide effective challenge through the more frequent and systematic scrutiny of pupils' progress information across the academic year.

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

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and your deputy. We visited classrooms and outdoor areas together to observe the science workshops being undertaken. I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I met with a group of pupils and listened to them read. I looked closely at a selection of books with the English and mathematics leaders. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body to discuss their work in the school. I talked to a parent and looked at the six responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies and other information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, how effectively teachers were being supported to develop their practice, the breadth of the curriculum and the contribution of governors in supporting and challenging you as a new executive headteacher.