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Mr Oliver Flitcroft
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Flitcroft

Short inspection of Seaton Delaval First School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team share a strong sense of moral purpose in your commitment to achieve the very best for all pupils and create a vibrant learning community where everyone is happy, safe and learning. This is underpinned by an ethos of high expectation where all teachers contribute to a culture of ongoing improvement.

You have decisively addressed areas for improvement from the previous inspection. For example, through highly effective work in mathematics, pupils have challenging opportunities to apply their skills in real-life situations. You have strengthened whole-school leadership by building a strong team of leaders across different phases and subjects. These leaders continually monitor pupils' progress and share good practice to drive improvement. As a result of effective teaching, high expectations and rigorous systems, pupils make strong progress throughout their time in Seaton Delaval First School.

You, senior leaders and governors know the school well. Teaching and learning are kept continually under the spotlight through rigorous monitoring. Leaders are empowered to take full responsibility for their area of the school's provision, which has brought a fresh focus and energy to improving teaching and learning. You and your teachers have responded diligently to the increased demands of the new national curriculum and associated assessment tasks. As a result, at key stage 1 in

2016, pupils achieved outcomes that were above those seen nationally, especially in mathematics and reading. You have recognised, however, that the proportion of higher-attaining pupils working at greater depth, particularly in writing, needs to increase and action is already underway to address this. However, further work is required to ensure that this group of pupils make even better progress so that a higher proportion reach greater depth.

Children in the early years are increasingly making strong progress from starting points that are below those expected for their age when they begin Nursery. However, the proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is still below the 2016 national average.

Pupils' progress is closely tracked and reviewed on a regular basis and summaries of progress are shared with governors. Regular moderation within school and with external partners lends an accuracy to school tracking information. Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well and progress reviews inform future improvement activities and interventions to support underachieving pupils. Interventions are closely monitored and operate on a fluid and flexible basis, and you and your teachers are careful to ensure that there is always a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Performance management procedures are extremely rigorous and individual targets are closely aligned to whole-school targets. Professional development opportunities are highly valued by staff and used to continually support pupil progress. Staff morale is high and all spoken to feel valued by you and the governing body.

You have an experienced and committed team of governors who share a passionate commitment to the school. The governing body is led by two highly skilled chairs who work extremely well together and bring complementary knowledge and understanding to support the work of the school. Governors regularly review current progress to check the impact of teaching, new initiatives and additional funding. They are mindful of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive up-to-date training. Both chairs are aware that governor training is crucial and that further support is needed to continue to develop individual governors' skills. The governing body has taken robust action to ensure that pupils in Seaton Delaval First School receive the best teaching experiences possible. As both chairs say, 'We are not prepared to accept underperformance from anyone.'

Your team's commitment to pupils' academic development is matched in their commitment to pupils' wider personal and social development. Pupils behave in an extremely positive way and show great care and concern for each other. This reflects you and your teachers' high standards and expectations. Pupils understand that good behaviour is more than following rules; they see that it is about positive attitudes and having high aspirations for their futures. You work extremely well with outside agencies to provide appropriate support and guidance for the most vulnerable pupils that come to your school and their families.

Your actions to promote good attendance are successful and the attendance of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is currently above that experienced nationally. These pupils currently also make good progress across all key stages. Links with parents and carers are strong. The majority of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and free-text, and those spoken to during the inspection, appreciated the support that you and your teachers provide and the progress their children make. As one parent said, 'This is a lovely school, great teachers and a really caring headteacher.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team maintain a constant and intensive focus on the welfare of pupils at all times. The school's safeguarding processes are of a high quality and reflect a culture where actions to promote pupils' safety and welfare permeate all aspects of the school's work. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Leaders seek regular updates on key safeguarding issues and share these with all adults working in the school. You and your staff have a very good understanding of issues that could impact on your pupils and work hard to ensure that actions needed are taken quickly. Thorough checks are carried out on all staff working within school and visitors are carefully monitored and given clear guidance as to what is acceptable when in school.

Pupils feel safe and well supported in school and their parents agree. Pupils of all ages from Reception to Year 4 speak confidently about being able to talk to any adult in school if they have a problem or concern. They have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online both in school and at home. Pupils feel that bullying is rare in school and if it did happen then it would be tackled quickly and effectively by their teachers. Your school's focus on providing a safe and caring community and the orderly atmosphere cultivated by teachers supports pupils in feeling safe and secure.

Inspection findings

- The impact of teaching is consistently good across all year groups and key stages. Teachers combine good subject knowledge with the ability to create classrooms that are stimulating learning environments. Pupils take great pride in sharing their work with visitors and appreciate how it is displayed around the school for everyone to see. You and your leaders have set high standards for teaching within school and staff are responding positively. Robust monitoring and evaluation by leaders at every level is ensuring that all pupils receive the same high quality of teaching in every classroom.
- Children are making a good start in their learning in the early years. They are making good and sometimes rapid progress from starting points below those expected for their age when they begin Nursery. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is improving every year, but remains below that seen nationally. However, leaders and teachers are

very aware of the need to further strengthen learning in the early years through a greater level of challenge for children, especially in writing. It is a clear priority in the school's development plan and actions already taken are having an impact on children's learning.

- Children in the early years are excited about their writing and display a particular pride in their achievements. For example a Reception child was able to talk enthusiastically about a recent piece of writing on lighthouses, describing its size, shape, colour and purpose – 'to stop ships bumping into things!' They used a wide range of vocabulary and their writing showed a confidence in the use of appropriate punctuation and the ability to link ideas together logically. The indoor and outdoor environment for the early years promotes highly effective learning, with clear spaces to build, cook, role play, explore the natural environment and make models, for example of pirate ships. Every opportunity is taken to extend children's language, both spoken and written.
- Lower-attaining pupils receive a good range of additional support both within and outside of normal classroom time. Leaders within the school track the progress of this group of pupils carefully and ensure that all necessary interventions are put into place immediately and pupils are appropriately challenged in all lessons. As a result, this group of pupils currently make good progress from their starting points at key stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4. However, higher-ability pupils at key stage 1 need further opportunities to work at greater depth, especially in their writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants develop pupils' reading skills effectively and achieve outcomes in the phonics screening check that are above those seen nationally. Pupils enjoy reading in school and have access to a wide range of exciting and interesting books in their newly developed library area.
- The school has many strategies to encourage and celebrate pupils' regular and punctual attendance. These include work undertaken with outside agencies and a range of class and individual prizes. Governors work hard with all families to ensure their understanding of the importance of being in school and what it can offer their children. As a result, attendance for all groups of pupils is in line with or above national figures, including those pupils who are the most vulnerable in school.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved and conduct themselves in a calm and kind manner in lessons and around the site. Relationships are strong as pupils feel valued and respected, and this gives pupils the confidence to contribute openly in lessons. Pupils are very positive learners, as teachers develop their learning and roles and skills.
- In turn, teachers are equally positive about their own development and recognise the professional opportunities that they are able to be involved in. In response to staff questionnaires teachers state that they are proud to work in Seaton Delaval First School.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of higher-ability pupils working at greater depth at key stage 1, particularly in writing, increases further
- the progress of children in the early years continues to be challenged and the proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception increases.

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

Anne Vernon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your senior leadership team. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I met with three members of the governing body, including the two joint chairs. I also met with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I undertook a range of short visits to lessons in all key stages with you. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 4 read. I also looked at pupils' work in books. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking. I examined the school website. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record of security and suitable checks on staff. I took account of 13 free-text responses from parents and 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- is the quality of teaching, learning and assessment consistent across all key stages and year groups? Do all leaders monitor and track the progress of different groups of pupils effectively?
- are lower-attaining pupils making good progress in key stage 1? Do they receive effective teaching and additional support to address gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills?

- in the early years are children challenged appropriately, particularly in writing?
- are leaders taking effective action to improve attendance, particularly the attendance of those groups of pupils who miss school regularly?
- are child protection and safeguarding arrangements robust and does a culture of vigilance exist across all members of staff?