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Mrs Angela McDermid
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McDermid

Short inspection of Collierley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although there has been a succession of changes in the school's leadership and some recent changes in the teaching staff, outcomes for pupils continue to be good. Your appointment as headteacher a year ago has clearly brought much-needed stability and a clear sense of direction for members of staff. You quickly and accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and have carefully checked the impact of the changes you have introduced. Your strong strategic leadership, well supported by the active governing body, is skilfully guiding the school out of a period of uncertainty and rebuilding the confidence of the community.

Despite the frequent changes of headteacher, leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. At that time, the standard of pupils' writing lagged behind that of their reading and mathematics. Since then, standards of writing in the school have improved so that outcomes across reading, writing and mathematics are consistently above those seen nationally. Last year, all pupils attained the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 and outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 1 were well above the national average. Current assessment information indicates that this positive picture will be sustained in 2017.

Your detailed school improvement plan includes a strong focus on developing

consistently strong teaching in the school. Good training and ongoing mentoring has been provided for the newly qualified teachers who joined the school last September. Together with your curriculum leaders you have made thorough and frequent checks on the quality of teaching and have provided teachers with specific feedback on how to improve their practice. You are supporting and challenging teachers to improve and hold them tightly to account through regular reviews of pupils' progress. You are providing well-considered additional support for some teachers, in order to strengthen their practice further. Nevertheless, some teaching still needs to improve as, over time, it is not delivering the progress you expect, despite the clarity of guidance you are providing.

Most pupils work hard and apply themselves well in lessons. Their books show they take pride in the presentation of their work and in their handwriting. They are keen to improve and edit their work across the week. By the end of key stage 2 they develop an excellent understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In some classes, pupils rapidly develop mathematical skills because they have frequent opportunities to tackle challenging problems. Although pupils I spoke to were very positive about their experience at school, levels of overall attendance are below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, in particular, needs to improve. You have rightly highlighted this issue with the governors, who have begun to take more robust action with families who allow their children to miss school regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

As a new headteacher, you have worked with the local authority to review safeguarding arrangements and ensure that policies are in line with the most up-to-date government guidance. All members of staff have received the necessary training and know what actions to take if they have any concerns about a child's safety. You have acted promptly when concerns have been referred to you and you work closely with external agencies to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable pupils. You ensure the maintenance of good-quality records.

In staff training sessions your staff have looked at national cases where safeguarding arrangements have failed. This has helped members of staff to reflect on the culture in Collierley Primary and to tighten up some aspects of practice. Governors also use pupil questionnaires and hold discussions with groups of pupils to gather their views. These approaches demonstrate that an effective culture of vigilance is in place.

Inspection findings

- Local authority moderated assessments of children show they mostly enter the school with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress across the Nursery and Reception, where basic skills in reading, writing and number are taught well. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) consistently praised the quality of provision in the early years unit. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children attaining the

expected standard is above that seen nationally. Children develop secure skills in reading and writing that prepare them well for Year 1.

- Pupils' phonics skills are developed successfully across key stage 1. Although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) dipped last year, I found that daily phonics sessions help pupils to secure a good understanding of the sounds letters make. Pupils engage actively in phonics sessions and routinely learn to apply their grasp of phonics to writing tasks. You are ensuring that the progress of every pupil is carefully assessed and, where additional support is needed, it is provided. Pupils who fall short of the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check quickly go on to develop their reading skills effectively. Regular reading practice helps them to secure basic skills and develop as fluent readers. By the end of Year 2, a high proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in the national phonics screening check. The most able readers are provided with suitably challenging texts to stretch them further and fire their imagination.
- Overall, progress across key stages 1 and 2 is good; pupils leave the school with levels of attainment above the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Disadvantaged pupils do well, making similar progress to other pupils nationally and attaining standards above those achieved by other pupils nationally. However, your checks on teaching and your assessment information show that rates of progress are not consistent across classes. I looked closely at the support and challenge you are providing to address this. Where necessary you have set specific objectives and are providing teachers with regular feedback on their progress. You are also checking pupils' books regularly to gauge the impact of this support. As appropriate, you have deployed extra adult help into classrooms where progress is slower. You have also strengthened the school's assessment procedures and now intervene more quickly if any pupil falls behind. You and the governors are determined to ensure that inconsistencies are tackled and that every year group makes the progress they should.
- Pupils mostly behave well and show positive attitudes. The atmosphere in most classrooms is very purposeful; pupils concentrate well and strive to achieve their individual targets. Occasionally, some pupils are less engaged and less committed to learning. The vast majority of pupils are polite and respectful of one another and of members of staff. Relationships are warm and friendly across the school.
- Levels of attendance last year were below the national average for primary schools and have only improved marginally this year. Consequently, improving attendance remains a priority for the school. You have employed a wide range of strategies to raise the profile of attendance with parents and pupils. The attendance officer provides helpful analysis of attendance patterns and makes home visits to challenge families where attendance is weaker. However, the attendance officer's time is very limited. Governors have begun to use their discretionary powers more actively to issue fines for poor attendance.
- The chair of the governing body, appointed last November, is working in close partnership with you and is providing strong support. He and the vice-chair have a good understanding of how well the school is performing (which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection) and use this knowledge to target

their visits. Governors focus on checking the impact of actions in the school improvement plan effectively. They provide other governors with clear reports and are quick to act on their findings.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make strong progress across all classes by eradicating inconsistency in the quality of teaching
- the overall level of attendance improves, especially the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, so that it compares favourably with the national average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body 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. We visited classrooms together, looked at some books and spoke to pupils about their learning. I met with a group of pupils and listened to some of them read. Together we looked in more detail at pupils' writing books to gauge their progress over time. I also met with a group of teachers and a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I looked at the 24 responses to Parent View and the 16 responses to both the staff and pupil survey. 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 teaching of reading and writing and the contribution of governors in supporting and challenging you as a new headteacher.