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Miss Kristine McCormack
Headteacher
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Dear Miss McCormack

Short inspection of Crookhill Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 October 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 established a calm, purposeful ethos that allows pupils to feel safe and confident, enabling them to flourish. Your inclusive approach to meeting the needs of all pupils is exemplified by your motto, 'working together, we succeed'. This principle is borne out in practice. Your commitment to working in positive partnership with staff, parents and governors to achieve the very best outcomes for pupils is tangible. Responding to Ofsted's online questionnaires, parents, carers and pupils are certain that their views and opinions matter. Parents describe a 'warm, happy and friendly' environment where 'every child is given room to grow and learn'. Pupils say that 'everyone gets along' and that poor behaviour is rare. Pupils talked to the inspector about 'great' and 'helpful' teachers who make learning fun.

Pupils in each key stage make consistently good progress; their attainment over time matches or exceeds national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Beyond these core subject essentials, you are also passionate about providing a comprehensive, wide-ranging experience for pupils. All subject leaders support and challenge teachers effectively to plan stimulating topics that motivate and capture pupils' interests. As a result, pupils develop specific skills and knowledge across the curriculum. They acquire a deepening understanding and well-rounded appreciation of music, art, history and the full wealth of statutory subjects.

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the broad variety of trips, visits and visitors that

inspire them and enhance their learning opportunities. Striking displays of pupils' work and their well-presented books are testament to the rich daily diet that pupils experience.

In partnership with the wider leadership team, you centre improvement planning on a keen understanding of the school's effectiveness. Together, leaders evaluate teaching and learning rigorously and analyse pupils' outcomes thoroughly. This means that development priorities are the right ones. Subject and senior leaders recognise, for example, that the pace and confidence with which the youngest pupils pick up and use early reading, writing and mathematical skills require closer scrutiny. In 2017, according to the school's own information, the proportion of children reaching early learning goals in each specific area was lower than national averages seen in 2016. In order to enable children in early years to apply their deepening understanding with ease as they move through the school, 'basic skills fluency' is quite rightly a core improvement target.

You have tackled the previous inspection report's recommendations successfully. Teaching and learning in mathematics and writing have gone from strength to strength in recent years. In 2016, in key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in both writing and mathematics was well above national figures. Your own assessment information shows that pupils attained similarly positive outcomes in 2017. The work in current pupils' books indicates that teaching and learning in each of these subjects remain effective.

In 2017 in Year 6, however, pupils' attainment in reading at the expected standard fell below national averages. Alert to issues, you and senior leaders identified cohort-specific barriers correctly and worked diligently to address these. You provided additional support for groups and individual pupils but ultimately, outcomes in reading were disappointing. While pupils overall made average progress in reading and you have clear evidence of the difference your interventions made for this group over time, you are not complacent. You have fittingly included reading as a key area for improvement in development plans. Your focus on improving the proportion of all pupils in key stage 2 reaching a greater depth in reading, including disadvantaged pupils, is the correct one.

Governors and leaders can confidently discuss spending plans and the difference that additional funding makes to disadvantaged pupils' learning and outcomes. Governors are supportive of leaders' priorities and actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They have clear sight of successes and also know where weaknesses lie. Governors can accurately explain that overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their school over time. In 2015 and in 2016 in key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to that of other pupils nationally. In key stage 1 in 2016, disadvantaged pupils' attainment matched or exceeded national averages in all subjects. Governors know, however, that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 and 2017 was lower than national averages.

Governors are heightening their level of challenge to senior leaders about this

aspect of their work. Governors are also mindful that they need to act swiftly to bring the website into line with statutory requirements in terms of pupil premium spending plans.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety, protection and care of pupils are of prime importance to you and your staff. Consequently, frequent and thorough staff and governor training takes place to ensure that all adults understand and execute their duties responsibly. Adults follow school policies and procedures diligently. Leaders and governors adhere to safe recruitment practices when appointing staff, for example, and they know how and to whom they must report any concerns that they may have.

You make sure that records documenting issues or concerns, actions taken and consequences for pupils are detailed and up to date. Staff work particularly well with external agencies and other professionals, such as speech therapists, educational psychologists and health experts to support vulnerable families and pupils. This partnership working means that you can signpost families to appropriate services and address needs promptly.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. Their consistently good attendance and the sensible manner with which they discuss risk-taking in their forest school adventures – ‘only climb as high as you feel comfortable’ – attest to this. Pupils also talk confidently about how to use information technology safely; they understand that internet filters and blocks are in place for their protection. Pupils feel sure that staff will listen to them and help where needed. Regular anti-bullying weeks make them feel well equipped to manage potential conflict and support one another to behave in a safe, respectful and positive manner.

Inspection findings

- You and other leaders focus fully on pupils and their potential. Alongside senior and subject leaders, you are dedicated to ensuring that pupils experience a wealth of opportunities across subjects. Together you organise the school day to make sure that teachers have room to implement stimulating lessons and topics, developing wider skills, knowledge and understanding across the primary curriculum.

- Although cohorts vary year on year, in 2016 and again this year, you have

correctly identified a significant proportion of children entering the Reception class with basic skills in reading, writing and number that are lower than those typically expected for their age. Early years staff work well with external nursery partners to explore issues and to define shared goals and expectations in terms of these basic skills. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development, particularly, as they move through the Reception class. In 2017, however, the proportion of children meeting early learning goals in reading, writing and number was lower than national averages. The proficiency with which children manipulate and apply their basic reading, writing and mathematical skills therefore remains an area for further development.

- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and careful evaluation of pupils' work in lessons and books to plan effectively for all groups of pupils. Staff challenge the most able pupils well and support lower ability pupils appropriately. This means that most pupils make good or better progress in all subjects. In 2016 and 2017, the proportions of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 who reached the expected standard in mathematics and writing, for example, was well above national averages.
- You have recently raised the profile and importance of reading. Pupils enjoy reading. Fresh reading materials have sparked their interest and several new reading initiatives have won their approval. Pupils who read with the inspector did so with skill, fluency and good understanding. Your analysis of the most recent pupil outcomes, however, correctly identifies reading in key stage 2, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, as an improvement priority. Improving the pace and depth with which pupils acquire basic reading skills early on is also a key factor in driving up the proportions of pupils reaching a greater depth in reading as they move through the school.
- Pupils are a credit to the school and their families. Their behaviour indoors and outside is splendid. They move sensibly in and around the site, needing little guidance from staff to manage their duties and responsibilities. Pupils show respect towards others and are extremely well mannered. They are confident that their school is a good, safe and exciting place to be. One pupil's view encapsulated the view of others: 'I like this school just the way it is.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading in key stage 2 improves, with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils
- children in early years have heightened fluency in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics
- the website fully complies with statutory requirements regarding the pupil premium spending plan and impact statement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gateshead. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spent time with you and senior leaders. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils formally and informally. I reviewed school documentation and information, including policies, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I talked with parents at the school gate, taking account of 16 free-text comments and 30 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were also 14 responses from members of staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire.