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Mrs Maria Carlton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Carlton

Short inspection of Bewley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment in September 2015, you spent valuable time getting to know the needs and interests of the school and the wider school community. This has enabled you to establish an ambitious vision for the future success of the school. Coupled with your accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weakness, this ensures that you are quick to secure improvement when you identify a need.

You have a strong determination to give pupils the best experience of school possible. You have nurtured a strong and highly cohesive team whose members share the same high expectations as you. You value the hard work of your staff and support and encourage them by investing heavily in high-quality training. You are currently providing training to enable the middle leaders to be more fully involved in the school's improvement. However, you do not shy away from making difficult decisions and holding staff to account. As a result, you have sustained the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the school's last inspection.

Almost half of those children starting school arrive with skills that are lower than those typical for children of their age, specifically in the areas of learning associated with communication and language. Such is the strength of your induction procedure that staff have a detailed understanding of each child's needs well before they start school. This means that all children get off to a flying start and by the time they

leave Reception, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased year on year and is now slightly above the national average. All groups of children, including the most vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. However, you recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that activities planned for the outdoor learning environment capture children's imagination consistently and extend and challenge their thinking further.

One of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection was to improve the school's systems for recording pupils' achievement. You made this one of your first priorities and you have developed an effective system that successfully records pupils' progress and highlights those pupils in danger of underachievement. Meticulous, regular analysis of this information means that you and senior leaders are able to quickly identify pupils who need additional support to plug the gaps in their learning. This means that you have continued to maintain the good outcomes for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

One of your most important actions upon appointment was to develop the school's curriculum. Its central aims are to promote pupils' well-being, raise their aspirations and promote the local community's proud industrial heritage in science and technology. The carefully chosen topics and thoughtful planning ensure that pupils love learning and talk excitedly about their studies and the wider school experiences on offer. Coupled with your high expectations for behaviour, this makes a powerful contribution to pupils' excellent attitudes and underpins the calm and purposeful atmosphere which permeates your school.

Governors bring a range of skills and experiences to their role and share the same passion and determination to excel. They seek the support of external consultants to improve their monitoring skills and this is having a positive effect on the challenge and level of questioning they afford school leaders. Together, you provide a strong sense of purpose and direction.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding and have ensured that arrangements are fit for purpose. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children. You promote a strong culture of vigilance and early response to identified issues. You have well-established relationships with a range of professionals who are helping the school to keep pupils safe.

Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that they are up to date with the most recent and relevant legislation. All staff understand the responsibility they have in keeping children safe. A dedicated family support worker ensures that some of the most vulnerable pupils receive appropriate care and support.

Pupils say that they are well looked after and know that there is always a trusted

adult in whom they can confide. They conduct themselves in a friendly and orderly manner both inside the classrooms and around the school. Relationships are strong as pupils know that teachers have their best interests at heart. Pupils are positive learners and are keen to discuss their work with one another. As a result, pupils consider that their school is a safe and happy place.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, although pupils' outcomes remained good overall, there were large gaps between disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared with that of other pupils nationally. As part of the inspection, I wanted to find out what leaders have done to tackle this. I found that a raft of focused intervention programmes and well-targeted teaching have resulted in a marked reduction in the achievement gaps evident in 2016. While this is very promising, you recognise that there is still more to do to reduce further the long tail of underachievement that is evident from pupils starting school.
- Weaknesses identified in mathematics at key stage 1 formed a further focus for the inspection. Together we reviewed the quality of teaching in mathematics. Teachers have rightly focused upon securing formal methods of arithmetic and consolidating early mathematical skills. You have secured consistency in teachers' planning and established the highly effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. Such actions have ensured that you have maintained good rates of progress for all pupils. More pupils are now achieving the outcomes expected. However, some activities do not offer pupils sufficient challenge to think more deeply about their learning, particularly for the most able and the disadvantaged most able pupils.
- Pupils' attendance overall has remained above average for several years, but last year increasing proportions of disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent from school. The relentless efforts of you and your parent support adviser have ensured that both parents and pupils are aware of your high expectations for good attendance. The support worker also applies your procedures for managing pupils' attendance with rigour. Consequently, the most recent data indicates that overall attendance figures have remained above the national averages, and more importantly, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now average.
- Governors monitor diligently the impact of pupil premium funding. They know the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face and ensure that money is spent wisely to diminish the differences in learning that exist when children start school. The evaluation of pupils' outcomes in 2017 identified that significant gains had been made in diminishing the differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of their peers in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Governors acknowledged that documentation relating to the school's use of pupil premium funding was not fully compliant with the Department for Education's requirements. This was put right during the inspection.
- Owing to staff changes, several subject leaders are new to their roles. They are

enthusiastic, knowledgeable and keen to play a fuller part in leading whole-school improvement. While you have provided support and training, you recognise that this remains an area of leadership that needs to be strengthened further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently challenge the most able and the disadvantaged most able pupils with work that is well matched to their abilities
- subject leaders continue to strengthen their role in raising pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with the senior leaders about their improvement work. I met with representatives of the governing body and I also spoke with a representative of the local authority. You and I observed provision and learning in almost all year groups. I talked with pupils and heard some of them read. I scrutinised a range of documents relating to the school's self-evaluation and safeguarding. I analysed minutes of governing body meetings and also considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View.