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Mrs Caroline Hodgson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hodgson

Short inspection of Esh Winning Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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.

On taking up your role as headteacher in September 2015, you appraised the school's strengths and areas for further development incisively. Then, you took timely action to strengthen the school's senior leadership team. As a result, all leaders are clear about their responsibilities, understand pupils' assessment information and lead school improvement effectively. Leaders embody the school's motto of 'Nurturing minds, inspiring learning'.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. The actions identified in the school's plans for further improvement are appropriate. However, the plans do not contain precise targets by which governors can measure the effectiveness of actions undertaken, especially with regard to the progress made by your disadvantaged and most able pupils.

Senior leaders have taken robust action to improve the quality of teaching and learning overall and, in particular, in relation to writing. This was an area for development at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils enjoy attending Esh Winning Primary School. The vast majority attend school every day and on time. However, a small minority of disadvantaged pupils are absent too often. Pupils carry out roles of responsibility around the school with gusto. The

three members of your mini police force were excellent ambassadors for your school during my guided tour on the morning of the inspection. Your pupils feel safe and secure in school. All are eager to learn. They told me that there is more learning time available now because they do not have to change their shoes every time they go outside. Pupils like this change.

You and your staff provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are attended well. Pupils and their parents appreciate the work of the staff to make the school's outdoor learning environment exciting and vibrant. As one parent put it, 'The emphasis on the outdoors promotes values which are really relevant to children's health and well-being.'

Another parent described Esh Winning as a 'fantastic school, with well-behaved children and staff who are always happy to help with anything'. Governors, staff and pupils told me that behaviour is good and improving. However, governors have not asked you to report the number and types of behavioural incidents that occur in school to them formally.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's checks and records in relation to the safe recruitment of staff are fully compliant with the government's requirements.

You ensure that staff and governors are trained well in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. They understand the procedures for making referrals appropriately to take action where there are concerns about a pupil. The school's safeguarding records are clear and show effective work with numerous external agencies to ensure pupils' well-being and safety. Your staff go the extra mile for vulnerable pupils and their families. They access bespoke training in order to meet individual pupils' needs precisely.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when working online. Even the very youngest know not to give out any information about themselves to strangers.

Inspection findings

- Your leadership and that of your senior team is strong. Leaders manage the performance of teachers and teaching assistants well. Teaching and learning in lessons is evaluated alongside pupils' assessment information and the work in their books. Leaders have supported weaker performance sensitively but robustly.
- The school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is strong. The new coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo) has a thorough knowledge of the attainment and progress of each pupil who has SEN and/or disabilities. The vast majority are making good progress from their individual starting points and a small minority are making outstanding progress. The SENCo's practice is innovative and inspiring. For example, her research project into pupils' sensory processing difficulties led to the installation and development of a

sensory room in school. The SENCo's data shows that pupils who access the sensory room become much calmer and more receptive to learning.

- Overall, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Pupils read well and regularly. Leaders are aware that pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2 lagged behind the progress they make in reading and mathematics in 2017. The subject leader for English analysed pupils' writing thoroughly, identified weaker aspects of teaching and implemented improvement actions. As a result, the pupils currently in the school are making more rapid progress in writing, especially in spelling, punctuation and grammar. More pupils are working at and above age-related expectations this year than were at the same point last year.
- Leaders, quite correctly, have put in place actions to improve the achievement of the school's most able pupils further. For example, in mathematics teachers are beginning to give their pupils opportunities to use their skills and abilities to carry out mathematical investigations. Pupils are beginning to record their work very systematically. They are making more rapid progress.
- Similarly, leaders have implemented plans to improve the attainment and progress made by disadvantaged pupils further. Disadvantaged pupils, who need a little extra help to catch up with their peers in school and nationally, are accessing carefully planned intervention activities. These pupils are making more rapid progress this term than previously.
- Overall, pupils attend school more often than their peers nationally. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attend school every day is lower than the number of non-disadvantaged pupils. The new parental support adviser is working proactively with a small number of disadvantaged pupils and their families to improve school attendance. Staff and pupils understand fully that the pupils who make the most progress are the pupils who attend school every day and on time.
- Governors know the school well through their regular 'special interest' monitoring visits. They have arranged to undertake another review of their skills following a number of changes to the governing body. In addition, the local authority has been commissioned to carry out a governance 'health check' before the end of the spring term 2018. Governors are unable to challenge and support leaders' efforts to improve pupils' behaviour because they have not asked for any information about the number and types of behaviour incidents that occur in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils attend school more regularly and make better progress to catch up with their peers nationally
- more of the school's most able pupils reach greater depth in their learning at the end of key stage 1 and reach the very highest standards at the end of key stage 2, especially in writing
- systems and procedures to analyse trends in pupils' behaviour are effective.

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

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I checked a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement and minutes of meetings of the governing body. In addition, I held discussions with a representative of Durham local authority. I considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 10 free-text responses. You and I visited classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked the progress made by pupils in their workbooks, heard pupils reading in lessons, talked formally to a group of six pupils and talked more informally to pupils in lessons about their learning.