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Mrs Jill Hodgson
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Dear Mrs Hodgson

Short inspection of West Cornforth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2016, you have provided exceptional leadership. This has resulted in a 'step change' in improvements in outcomes for children in the early years and pupils across the school. You are well supported by your leadership team and governors, who are similarly ambitious to provide the very best education for your pupils. Along with your leaders and governors, you have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The school's comprehensive self-evaluation and improvement plan clearly identify the priorities for improving the school further.

Leaders, staff and governors have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have also maintained the previously identified strengths. For example, teachers plan work that is well matched to pupils' needs. This is because they make effective use of assessments to tailor the work effectively to pupils' learning. Prompt support for pupils who have not fully grasped an aspect of learning helps them to catch up quickly. Leaders regularly check on work in pupils' books and analyse pupils' progress information. They make effective

use of their findings to ensure that pupils make good, and often rapid, progress.

Regular, carefully planned and well-structured phonics teaching which starts from the early years has a very positive effect upon pupils' reading and writing skills. During our visits to Nursery and Reception classrooms, we observed children well engaged during phonics teaching and writing lessons. Consideration of children's work demonstrated pupils' effective use of phonics skills and sentence punctuation. The interesting 'super hero' context motivated children to produce responses which were both creative and of a high quality in content, presentation and handwriting.

Staff work hard to provide pupils with regular practise of mathematics including developing pupils' recall of number bonds and multiplication facts. This was one of the aspects identified for development at the previous inspection. You are currently focusing on developing pupils' skills in problem solving and reasoning. During our visits to mathematics lessons and our scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books, we noted that, while these approaches are developing, there is further work to do to embed this work.

Provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is a key strength in your school. You and your staff design and regularly refine the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. A wide range of visits and of visitors ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and develop good citizenship skills. Respect for others and an understanding of 'right and wrong' runs throughout your school. Staff set clear expectations for behaviour and learning and make effective use of praise. As a result, pupils behave very well in lessons and at breaktimes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out appropriate checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. You recently developed further your approaches to recording safeguarding and pupil welfare information and ensured that staff are well trained in this system. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You and your staff work effectively with parents and carers, and other agencies and take prompt action if you have any concerns about pupils' welfare.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff have worked hard to secure considerable improvements in pupils' outcomes across the school. Consequently, pupils' progress and attainment compare very favourably with national averages in many measures at the end of the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Your assessments of current pupils and the evidence found in pupils' books demonstrate that pupils

continue to make good and often rapid progress across all year groups. You rightly identify that there is further work to be done to ensure that improvements in pupils' attainment in mathematics continue.

- In 2017, pupils' progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, was well above the averages found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was higher than the national average. By the end of Year 6, pupils are exceptionally well prepared academically for starting secondary school.
- You and your staff focus on improving pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics from the very outset. One example of the impact of this work is the improvements noted in pupils' phonics outcomes. Over the last three years, there has been an improvement in pupils' phonics results in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2016 and 2017, the school's results have been above the national average.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard by the end of key stage 1 was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates the good and often better progress made by these pupils.
- You and your staff are working hard to improve pupils' attendance and to reduce the persistent absence of some pupils. Your determined approaches, including raising the profile of good attendance, are bearing fruit. The levels of pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, have risen steadily. You have ensured effective support for pupils and their families where absence levels have been too high. Consequently, attendance levels are improving for these pupils in the vast majority of cases.
- All staff set high expectations for behaviour. Your pupils believe that behaviour is good in lessons and during playtimes and lunchtimes. They trust that staff promptly deal with any rare incidents of bullying. Your effective systems for monitoring behaviour ensure that pupils receive timely support and guidance. Over recent years, you have almost eliminated exclusions and on the rare occasions these happen, you seek appropriate support from a range of agencies to support vulnerable pupils in school.
- The early years leader, who has been in this role since September 2016, has ensured a focused drive for continuous improvement. She understands the priorities for further development well and works effectively with the members of the early years team. The focused effort by the early years staff has ensured that children get off to a 'flying start' to their education. Children make good and many make rapid progress from their starting points when entering school. As a result, the proportion of children leaving Reception who have achieved a good level of development has improved over the last three years. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving this measure was substantially above the national average and the vast majority of children were well prepared for starting in Year 1.
- Since the last inspection, the school has introduced provision for two-year-old

children. During our visits to classrooms, we noted how settled these children were and that they were developing high levels of independence and cooperation with other children and staff. In this safe and supportive environment, children listen and join in with stories and nursery rhymes, developing their early reading skills. In other activities, such as the construction area, children engage well and staff encourage children's speaking and listening skills that help to advance children's mathematical vocabulary.

- Your leaders for English and mathematics check the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes regularly and take action to drive improvement. For example, the leader for mathematics' analysis of Year 6 assessment responses identified that pupils' knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages needed to improve. She promptly put in training and resources to address this. Similarly, the English leader has taken action to engender a love of literature across the school that has impacted positively on pupils' reading and writing outcomes.
- By careful auditing of their skills and experience, governors have identified where they need to improve to provide effective challenge and support to leaders. Developments to governors' meeting structures and the addition of governors with relevant backgrounds have strengthened governance. Regular visits into school, to consider the effect of strategic decisions on the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and personal development, assist governors in knowing the strengths and priorities for development well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's plans to improve pupils' progress in mathematics are implemented and that the proportions of pupils attaining the expected and higher standards continue to increase to at least the averages found nationally.

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

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and your deputy headteacher. I also held meetings with the leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body,

who were able to provide me with additional information. I took into account school documentation, assessment information, and policies and information posted on the school's website. I considered the six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the school's recent survey of parents' views. Along with you, I visited six classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' English and mathematics work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying.