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Mrs Eleanor Dunstan
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Dear Mrs Dunstan

Short inspection of Bowmandale 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and built on the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As soon as you enter the school, the sense of high expectations and ambition for all pupils is apparent. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have brought a crystal-clear vision for every child to excel, which you articulate confidently to the staff team and the school community. You, along with other school leaders and governors, have an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and the areas that it most needs to develop. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning in class; they are motivated and work hard, responding positively to adults and their peers. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. There is a sense of everyone being on this very purposeful journey together.

The deputy headteacher and middle leaders understand their roles in school improvement and direct the areas they have responsibility for well, setting high standards and leading by example in their classrooms. Senior leaders have built a culture of trust and support, and give precise direction to staff. Combined, these impact strongly on the improving outcomes, such as those seen at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. While outcomes in writing and mathematics are strong overall by the time pupils leave key stage 1, leaders have accurately identified that there is still more work to be done in improving outcomes in phonics through key stage 1 and into key stage 2.

The governing body is focused, astute and ambitious for the school. It is determined to fully support school leaders in the recently accelerated journey to

outstanding. Governors are confident that school leaders are taking appropriate actions and developing the positive culture that will make this happen. They use a wide variety of information from senior leaders, middle leaders, the local authority and peer reviews to inform and support their work.

The school has a good partnership with the local authority through the focused work with the school improvement partner and the training provided for staff and governors. Staff and governors value their work with other schools in the Barton Local Collaborative Trust, which gives opportunities to share strong practice and moderate the school's work and judgements.

Writing was identified at the last inspection as an area to improve. Recent standards in writing and pupils' work confirm that considerable work has taken place to support pupils in developing their skills in writing. Teachers use engaging and creative tasks across the curriculum to promote positive writing activities and experiences. Pupils speak confidently about how they enjoy the exciting tasks that link to their topic. They explain how they are supported to improve their work and about the awards they are motivated to achieve, such as gaining a spot on the 'remarkable writers' board.

Leaders' and teachers' focus on making topics, reading materials and writing activities purposeful, accessible and inspiring for both boys and girls is paying off. Leaders' understanding that vulnerable groups contain a high proportion of boys is helping them to address any potential barriers to pupils' learning and direct support appropriately. During the inspection, boys and girls showed similarly positive attitudes to learning, and success in their activities, across year groups.

The last inspection also highlighted that the quality of provision in the early years needed to improve. Particular direction was given to ensuring that the outdoor area promotes good progress in all areas of learning, and that well-structured tasks encourage pupils to become independent learners. Expectations in the early years have been raised since the last inspection. A strong team of practitioners has introduced ways to ensure that areas of the outdoor and indoor environment give opportunities for pupils of all abilities to move forward in their learning, such as through the 'rainbow challenges'. All adults demonstrate skills in the way they model activities, and question, support and enthuse the children in their care. Tasks are demonstrated well by adults, so that children know how to be successful when they are working independently or alongside their peers. For example, during my visit, children were eager to join in with a tin-can alley activity outside. Supported well by an adult, children proceeded down the run up, counting the steps to 20 as they went. When they knocked over the tins with the ball at the end, they counted their score. The adult's support and direction was appropriate to each child's needs and moved them on in their learning. Children showed delight in the adult's praise, the score they achieved and the physical and mathematical challenge of the activity.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate training takes place in a timely way for all staff and governors and everyone knows what to do if they have a concern. A new electronic system has strengthened the way information is recorded and the way leaders are able to check on any actions being taken.

The safeguarding leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the learning mentor, work together to provide strong pastoral support for the pupils. Partnerships with parents are of high priority so that school and families can work together to ensure that pupils are safe, attend school regularly and behave well. Pupils' attendance is consistently better than the national average due to the rigour around the school's checks on attendance and the shared understanding between school and parents of the importance of good attendance.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe in a wide range of situations, through assemblies and classroom activities. Training about keeping safe online has been high on the school's agenda. Pupils are clear about some of the potential dangers of using the internet, as well as the opportunities it can bring. Leaders take care to teach pupils life skills that will support their social and emotional well-being. During the week of the inspection, parents and all pupils were involved in lessons and activities around positive relationships.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to find out how well pupils develop their early phonics and reading skills and what impact this has as pupils move through the school. The proportion of pupils reaching the Year 1 phonics standard has been below the national average for the last two years. You explained that you introduced a new programme for the delivery of phonics in September 2017 and that this is having a rapid impact on the progress pupils are making in phonics. I agree. The lessons we saw during the inspection and pupils' recent work in books demonstrate consistently strong teaching through Reception and key stage 1. Pupils are on task and motivated by the lively routines that are now in place to support them in decoding words, reading with fluency and applying sounds to spell words. You know that pupils in key stage 2, who did not have this system of teaching, need precise direction in improving their spelling. You and class teachers are addressing this well and improvements are starting to be seen in pupils' written work.
- Standards in reading have shown some fluctuation over recent years. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are strong, and an improvement was seen in the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in 2017. Lower outcomes in phonics have affected the reading fluency of lower ability pupils as they move into key stage 2, and you are giving careful direction to help eradicate any previous underperformance. Leaders and teachers select texts that will motivate and inspire all pupils. They plan creative activities that engage pupils in high-quality discussion. For example, we saw Year 2 pupils working successfully together to decode some of the words that Roald Dahl's 'BFG' has created. Pupils

were using their deduction skills to match the word with its possible meaning and share their thoughts with their peers. Teachers' attention to developing pupils' language skills comes through strongly in lessons and in the pupils' work. As a result of leaders' clear direction, high-quality text choices and teachers' precise direction for improvement, results at the end of key stage 2 improved substantially in 2017. You remain focused on building on these outcomes, and are addressing any differences between particular groups, such as boys and girls, and ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged.

- The strong outcomes in mathematics have been maintained and further improved. The school's approach to supporting pupils in mastering mathematics and the high expectations staff have of pupils developing their reasoning skills and applying their number skills bring positive outcomes. A high proportion of pupils reach expected and higher standards in mathematics by the time they leave school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to deliver the new programme of phonics teaching to support pupils in developing and applying their reading and writing skills more successfully
- work to address the previous underperformance of some of the key stage 2 pupils continues, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I looked at specific aspects of the school's work, including leadership, the quality of teaching and learning, the progress that pupils of all abilities are making and safeguarding arrangements.

You and I worked closely together throughout the inspection. We observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. Along with the deputy headteacher, we discussed the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. I listened to pupils read and talked to them about their learning. I studied a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, development plans,

records of the checks on teaching and learning, school assessment information and safeguarding documentation. I met with senior and middle leaders, representatives from the governing body, staff and pupils. I spoke with the school's local authority improvement partner on the telephone. I noted the 55 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to parents before school. In addition, I took into account the 33 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.