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Mrs Kerry Lilico
Acting Executive Headteacher
Stephenson Memorial Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lilico

Short inspection of Stephenson Memorial Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 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. 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 the last inspection, pupils have made increasingly strong and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements in pupils' progress are evident in each phase of the school. In recent years, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been rapid so that gaps in attainment at the end of key stage 2 have narrowed sharply.

Pupils develop as confident learners because teachers hold high expectations and are consistently challenging. Projects pose searching questions that press pupils to think deeply. Rich discussions in lessons encourage pupils to articulate their thinking and to find solutions to problems. Pupils work effectively with one another and use technology well to enrich their understanding. In lessons, they show positive attitudes and frequently display genuine excitement with the topics being covered. All the parents and carers who responded to Parent View would recommend the school.

Leadership at all levels is characterised by considerable drive and determination to

improve provision. Systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning are well developed and provide leaders with a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Planning for improvement is rigorous and leaders astutely gather information to see if their actions are having a positive effect. Work done to develop a more challenging and thought-provoking curriculum has had a profound impact since the last inspection. Similarly, the thought that has gone into developing aspects of teaching and learning is now underpinning consistently strong rates of progress across the school.

The school serves a disadvantaged community from which half of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. Many children enter the school with skills well below those typical for their age. The introduction of provision for two-year-olds in September 2015 is proving to be a successful development as children who attend are making accelerated progress. Skilful additional teaching is provided for children who have limited speech and language. Learning activities very effectively encourage talk as children play. In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers strike an effective balance between play and more directed activities that develop reading, writing and number skills. In recent years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has risen to be close to that seen nationally. Rapid progress continues across key stage 1. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check has risen steadily to match that seen nationally. Good extra support is provided for pupils with less secure reading skills. By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing and mathematics was above the national average last year. From low starting points, this represents rapid progress. Furthermore, a higher proportion of pupils than seen nationally attained the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school gives the safety and well-being of pupils a high priority and has built up a dedicated team of staff to ensure that the standard of safeguarding is high. The checks you make on the suitability of adults who work in or visit the school are exemplary. Any pupil who feels unhappy or concerned is quickly identified and support is provided from caring adults. Those pupils who are more vulnerable are carefully nurtured, which allows them to feel secure and to thrive in school. Pupils told me they trust your staff and value the care they provide. Your staff work closely with families in the community and with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils at risk receive the support needed.

You keep detailed records of the actions you take to protect children. Records show you and your staff doggedly pursue resolutions in the best interest of the child.

There is a tangible culture of care across the school. Staff work to support and nurture pupils from the start of the day at the very well-attended breakfast club. The quality of support provided across the day for the most vulnerable pupils is high. Older pupils take on responsibilities to look after younger pupils at social times and there are good arrangements in place, such as friendship lunches, to resolve

issues between pupils when they fall out with one another.

Inspection findings

- Highly effective leadership and management at all levels in the school, including governance, have improved the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. As a result, outcomes have improved and pupils currently in the school are making consistently strong progress across a broad range of subjects.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are typically confident, understand how to be effective learners and are curious and keen to learn more. The school's caring ethos and commitment to every pupils' well-being make a considerable contribution to the positive climate that pervades the school.
- The curriculum includes rich projects and thought-provoking big questions that challenge all pupils, including the most able. Learning in the core subjects is carefully planned so that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are systematically developed. As a result, all groups of pupils make strong progress. Careful analysis has been done to determine why a few pupils did not perform as well as expected in last year's national curriculum tests. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 was below the national average last year. Well-considered measures have been put in place to prevent this happening again.
- In the wider curriculum, pupils have rich experiences that stimulate and engage them effectively. However, leaders need to ensure that pupils are making equally good progress in subjects such as science, history and geography and master the skills they need to be successful in these subjects in the next stage of their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 rises and is sustained at or above that seen nationally
- pupils' progress across the wider curriculum is carefully checked to ensure that they develop the necessary skills for future success in the next stage of their education.

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 Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the senior leadership team, a group of middle leaders, the early years leader and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils and listened to some of them read. I visited lessons in each phase of the school with different leaders to look at the impact of your work to develop the quality of teaching. During lesson visits, I checked some pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' work across the full breadth of the curriculum with the deputy headteacher in order to evaluate the progress pupils had made over time. I looked at the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). I also considered the 34 responses to the staff survey and three responses to the pupil survey. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, assessment records and other information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school. In addition, I looked at the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of the early years provision, including that provided for two-year-olds. I also looked at the quality of leadership and management, including the work of governors, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.