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Mrs Laura Liddell  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Liddell

### **Short inspection of Bloemfontein 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 April 2014.

Based on the evidence available during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness of good as a result of this inspection.**

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in early years and key stage 1. Since your appointment to the school, you have worked systematically to improve many aspects of the school's performance. The proportion of children reaching the expected standard for their age by the end of the Reception Year has increased and is now in line with the national average. More pupils are now reaching the expected standard for their age by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils' progress is particularly strong in reading and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. However, you recognise that the quality of teaching and the rates of progress are more variable across year groups, especially in writing and in science. Similarly, teaching is not consistently enabling pupils to make faster progress to reach the highest standards of attainment.

Since you joined the school, you have prioritised the development of strong relationships across the school community. The vast majority of parents who spoke with me, or who responded to the inspection questionnaire, indicated their delight at the support they receive from the school. They have no hesitation in approaching you with any concerns. Pupils appreciate the increased efforts of staff to plan work which is tailored to their interests. As a result, most pupils work hard in class and enjoy school life. They are especially enthusiastic about the range of after-school clubs and visits

such as the skiing trip to France in key stage 2. Pupils were pleased to tell me that behaviour has improved in school as a result of the system you have introduced and that most pupils conduct themselves well.

Achievement is rising for disadvantaged pupils. In particular, more of these vulnerable pupils in early years and in key stage 1 are reaching the expected standard in reading and mathematics. Your detailed assessments and honest self-evaluation reflect that further work is needed to address the variable achievement of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 and to ensure that more reach the highest standards of attainment.

Governors are passionate about the school and are regular visitors. They know the school's strengths and what needs to be developed further. They recognise, however, that they need to sharpen the focus of their monitoring checks on the school's work in relation to pupils' attendance and safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all adults who work with pupils have received appropriate training so that they are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. You maintain detailed records of your work to keep pupils safe. These demonstrate that you make effective contributions to multi-agency meetings when pupils are at risk of harm.

Pupils are supported well to keep themselves safe. For example, as a result of the school's work, pupils can identify risks associated with using computers or playing online games. They are very clear about the steps they should take if issues arise and know not to share personal information with strangers.

Appropriate checks are conducted on the suitability of staff to work with children. However, leaders have not made sure that all of the checks are collated into one central record, in line with government advice. While governors receive regular updates on the school's work to keep pupils safe, they have not checked that this central record of recruitment checks is maintained in line with statutory guidance.

Leaders know that low attendance has been an issue over time for the school, including for disadvantaged pupils. Despite a wide range of actions to address this, there is little evidence to indicate any significant reduction in the absence and persistent absence of pupils. While leaders and governors are keeping a check on overall attendance, they have been less effective in establishing the impact of different initiatives to reduce absence. This limits leaders' ability to decide which actions to discontinue, and which are proving successful.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have developed strong links with a local nursery provision to ensure that children get a smooth start to the early years. Staff have benefited from training and now have a better understanding of the needs of individual children. They plan to capture children's interests and work hard to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. Consequently, children's progress has accelerated and the

proportion who are ready for the challenges of the key stage 1 curriculum has improved over time.

- You keep a regular check on the quality of teaching and provide detailed feedback to staff to help them to improve. This has led to better use of teaching assistants to support learning in classrooms. A strong focus on reading and mathematics has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and standards are increasing. More pupils are reading regularly for pleasure. A review of the curriculum for phonics has enabled teaching to be tailored to the needs of groups of pupils. However, you are aware that while teaching is strong in some classes, it is less effective in some parts of the school. This has led to variable achievement for some pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. In particular, work is not challenging enough to allow those with the potential to reach the highest standards to excel. This includes the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Your own evaluation of teaching identifies the teaching of writing as a priority for the school. You have undertaken work recently so that staff and pupils understand the quality of writing needed to reach and exceed the expected standard. This is beginning to make a difference and, in some classes, pupils make strong progress in writing. For example, pupils' work in the Year 1 class shows that teaching builds systematically on what pupils can already do. As result, they make steady gains in their writing skills. However, this has yet to extend across the whole school. Pupils' workbooks show that errors in the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar persist. Many pupils do not have a well-developed, neat handwriting script. Pupils are not challenged sufficiently well to write at length. Consequently, achievement in writing is variable.
- You are ambitious for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Your close attention to individual pupils' progress has enabled strong gains in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the end of the Reception Year and key stage 1. The current learning and progress of pupils shows, however, that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 remains below average, particularly in writing. You are aware that this needs to improve and that progress needs to accelerate so that this group of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' attainment in science at the end of Year 6 in 2017 declined and was below the national average. Pupils' workbooks show that achievement in science is inconsistent across the school. You have recognised this and begun to take action. You know that staff need further support to develop their subject knowledge so that they can plan the right work to challenge pupils and to cover all aspects of the national curriculum.
- Your records of behaviour incidents support pupils' views that behaviour has improved and is now good in the school. There is a clear system in place to ensure consistency in the rewards and consequences which pupils experience, linked to their behaviour. Over time there has been a notable reduction in the number of occasions where pupils do not behave well and no pupils have been excluded from the school in the past year.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is improved, particularly in science and writing, so that more pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make consistently strong progress
- teachers provide suitable challenge to enable a greater proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to achieve the higher standards of attainment
- robust action is taken to reduce the absence and persistent absence of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, so that it is at least in line with the national average for all pupils
- checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are recorded in line with statutory guidance and that this is monitored routinely by those with responsibility for safeguarding.

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

Claire Brown  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of the leadership team. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors. I discussed the school's journey of improvement with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons, at breaktime and also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I reviewed pupils' work in a range of subjects in a sample of their workbooks. You presented information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the work of teachers. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils, including records of incidents, were checked. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).