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Mrs Camp
Headteacher
Forres Primary School
Stanstead Road
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Dear Mrs Camp

Short inspection of Forres Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 May 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered 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 grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has continued to increase and you have become increasingly inclusive as a school. You have a good reputation locally for meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In particular, you meet the needs particularly well for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, so much so that you are one of only three schools in the United Kingdom to have received accreditation from the National Autistic Society.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, wear their uniform smartly and appreciate their teachers' efforts. Your school is a happy one where pupils are considerate of one another and typically behave well. You have an increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils settle in quickly and achieve particularly well.

Children in the early years make good progress, based on their below-average starting points. This progress is maintained at key stage 1, with the majority of pupils achieving at age-related expectations.

However, standards in key stage 2 have declined over time. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, who are taught in mixed-age classes, have experienced poor-quality teaching. This

situation has been made worse due to frequent changes to staffing in lower key stage 2 classes. As pupils have progressed through Years 5 and 6, this legacy of weak teaching has had a negative impact on their achievement at the end of key stage 2. In particular, pupils' achievement in reading has suffered. Your most-able pupils have also underachieved in writing and mathematics, as well as those who are disadvantaged, and for whom you receive additional funding through the pupil premium.

Although the staffing situation is now more stable in lower key stage 2, it is too early to measure the impact on standards of the teaching that these pupils experience. Additionally, some of your middle leaders are fairly new to post. Although my discussion with these colleagues indicated a willingness to improve the school, the impact of their leadership cannot yet be evaluated. Reassuringly, your school improvement plan includes initiatives to tackle the weaknesses I have identified. However, in the past, the school's leaders and governors appear to have been reacting to areas of weakness, rather than preventing them in the first place.

Parents, staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's online surveys are positive about the school and what you aim to achieve. One parent's response accurately evaluates the school's aims and how these relate to pupils' achievement: 'clearly passionate about the learning and development of children, albeit I do think they could be pushed more at times.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This is particularly important, as many of your pupils are deemed to be vulnerable. Staff in the school and governors have all taken part in the necessary training in order to promote safeguarding effectively. All the necessary policies and documentation relating to safeguarding have been distributed, read and signed off, and your safeguarding policy is being implemented effectively.

All of the required checks of the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers have been conducted and are suitably recorded on a single central register.

Your systems to raise any concerns about the safety of pupils and to involve external agencies are thorough. Your electronic system for recording such concerns and referrals ensures that all essential information is readily accessible to key personnel, including any details of resolution.

Inspection findings

- I looked at how well leaders and governors had maintained the standards achieved at the previous inspection and addressed the identified areas for improvement when the school was judged to be good. This indicates the effectiveness of leaders over time. One relevant area for improvement related to reading. Pupils in Year 6 in 2017 made well-below-average progress in reading compared to the national average. This aspect remains a priority for the school

and rightly features in the school improvement plan.

- The previous inspection also identified that some teaching needed improving because it did not sufficiently challenge some of the most able pupils. Recently published data for 2017 shows that not enough of the most able pupils make the progress they should by the end of key stage 2. Again, you are aware that a continued focus is required to provide your most-able pupils with an appropriate degree of challenge. Other previous areas for improvement, such as teachers' more accurate assessment of pupils' work, have been successfully addressed.
- Your middle leadership team is now more stable, but some of these colleagues are still growing into their role. However, the links you have formed with an effective partner school are enabling these leaders to model effective leadership skills and qualities.
- The published data for 2017 indicated underachievement in reading at the end of key stage 2, and that a lower proportion of pupils made the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics combined. Therefore I investigated the causes for this and evaluated the actions you are taking.
- Undoubtedly, the lack of stability in teaching in Years 3 and 4 which has led to weak teaching for all three classes is a major cause for this underperformance. Pupils who have experienced this weak teaching have not made up the shortfall in their progress in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers' assessments for reading were higher than pupils' actual outcomes, hence the published results from national curriculum tests for key stage 2 came as a surprise. You responded quickly to these results by using the local authority to broker support from a good school, which has a similar pupil profile, but has secured positive results. Leaders at all levels from both schools are working productively together and your staff have visited this good school to observe its practice. Systems, to ensure that greater accuracy is achieved when assessing pupils' progress, are now in place.
- You have rightly made reading a key focus across the school. Pupils who read to me did so with expression and fluency. Pupils in Year 6 regularly practise test papers and regular ongoing moderation of these tests is helping to secure more accurate forecasts. Your own data suggests that the proportion of pupils making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving. You have also arranged workshop sessions for parents so that they can encourage their children to read more at home.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their non-disadvantaged peers, both in school and nationally. Your analysis of the strategies you deployed for these pupils, including breakfast booster sessions, showed that these did not have the desired effect. You have now brought in qualified teachers from outside the school to work with these pupils. These teachers focus on reading and writing with pupils in Years 2 and 6. You have raised the profile of these pupils by having them overseen by the deputy headteacher.
- A number of your disadvantaged pupils now do additional mathematics work online with a 'virtual teacher', where their work is assessed and better matched to their needs. Your procedures for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of your recent interventions suggest that differences between

disadvantaged pupils' achievement and others are steadily diminishing. The governing body has also wisely commissioned an external review of pupil premium expenditure. This is yet to take place.

- The school's most recent outcomes in 2017 showed that the most able pupils did not make good progress at the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. You acknowledge that you 'took your eye off the ball'. You have very recently introduced mathematics challenge sessions for these pupils. Therefore, it is too early to measure their effectiveness. However, my visits to lessons show that teachers are now planning better for the needs of the most able pupils, who can select tasks that provide them with more challenge.
- Discussions with your most able pupils show that they feel that they are being challenged more by their teachers. Indeed, they are articulate about how they learn and have high aspirations. The work in their books also reflects more rapid progress over time.
- Finally, I looked at how well you encourage your pupils to attend school regularly. This was because persistent absence increased in 2017 from 8.5% to 10.3%.
- Your current attendance information shows that pupils' attendance is close to the national average and that pupils' persistent absence has decreased. There is very little difference between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. This is particularly important, bearing in mind that almost one third of your pupils are disadvantaged.
- You have well-established systems to check on pupils who are absent. For example, you prioritise absent pupils who are older because you know they are likely to walk to school alone and are at greater risk if you are unaware of their whereabouts. You have also arranged successful attendance workshops for parents whose children are likely to attend less regularly. Your rewards system also acknowledges pupils who have high attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress in reading improves across the school
- a greater proportion of the most able pupils make good progress
- the findings and the recommendations of the pupil premium review are acted on and the effectiveness of intervention strategies are monitored
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Years 3 and 4 continues to strengthen
- recently appointed middle leaders are supported and developed to secure rapid school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders as well as the leader of the early years and English, to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I met with the interim chair and five other members of the governing body to gain their views on the school. I also met with a representative of the local authority, as well as a groups of most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, who also showed me examples of their work. Four pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read to me from books of their choice.

I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation summary document, the school's plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. I held a meeting to examine the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance.

I undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning when visiting lessons. I took account of the views of 22 staff and 234 pupils who responded to the online survey. I also considered the 114 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.