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21 February 2018

Miss Patricia McGill  
Headteacher  
Newport Primary School  
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Dear Miss McGill

### **Short inspection of Newport Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 June 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The new leadership team, led very astutely by you, has a firm handle on what actions need to be taken to improve the school further, and who is best placed to lead each aspect of this. You wasted no time in setting out your vision for the school, and employed a deputy headteacher who shared your passion and ethos. Together, you are a strong and dynamic duo, ably supported by an assistant headteacher and two team leaders.

Together, you have all created a nurturing and supportive environment in which both pupils and their families feel cared for and well supported. Every effort goes into giving pupils the opportunity to thrive and develop into confident role models who contribute positively to society. This support is not confined to inside the school either. Varied strategies and systems to help families who are vulnerable within the community are having a positive effect. The parent support worker plays a critical role in this work and the level of trust between staff and families is superb. Pupils and parents all know that someone will listen to them and help. As a result, the school has become a safe haven for many families and has a reputation for this locally.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils are given more opportunities to extend and develop their writing. This is paying dividends. The design of the curriculum provides inspiration for pupils to be immersed fully in writing. Staff skilfully exploit pupils' interest to plan exciting learning. For example, staff worked with The Royal Shakespeare Company to develop an 'active approach' to

bringing Shakespeare alive. This approach now mirrors other areas of the curriculum, with pupils revelling in activities such as ensemble reading and drama to inspire their writing. Consequently, pupils are now making better progress in writing over time.

In addition, you and your leaders have designed, developed and amended your approach to assessing pupils so that teachers can meet pupils' needs more effectively. Your approach has evolved over time, and you have not shied away from admitting when your approach did not work. Instead, you researched, trialled and developed your methods so that you can now accurately identify where pupils need extra support and help in their learning.

During the inspection, I focused on how much progress pupils make in reading and mathematics, including those who are the most able. Your school improvement plan identified these as areas most urgently in need of development, and we agreed that further work is needed to ensure that pupils make better progress in these subjects. I also looked at pupils who speak English as an additional language, given the high proportion within the school's population. I found that a significant amount of these pupils arrived in school with no prior knowledge of English, and felt heartened by the way that every member of staff goes the extra mile to provide bespoke educational support, as well as pastoral care, for these pupils and their families.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

You are all committed to keeping pupils safe and have rigorous systems in place to address any concerns. You manage work with external agencies well, and support from key personnel is used to benefit those who are most vulnerable. Parents have benefited from a range of workshops, including those focused upon digital resilience and female genital mutilation. This has given parents the confidence to understand and discuss topical and sensitive issues with you where appropriate.

Staff receive regular training and updates, which mean they can spot subtle signs that pupils may need some form of help. All staff know what to do in these circumstances and who to speak to. The designated safeguarding leaders never leave anything to chance, acting always with integrity and determination. They challenge external personnel for more action when necessary, and this has proven vital in the protection of pupils.

### **Inspection findings**

- You remodelled and streamlined your leadership team so that leaders were very clear about their roles and responsibilities. You ensured that their areas of responsibility align to their strengths and passions. Consequently, improvements are now being made in a measured way, with real clarity and depth of understanding.
- Nearly 70% of pupils are recorded as having English as an additional language. However, many of these pupils have no prior knowledge of English when they enter

the school. This provides significant challenges for you and your staff. You have robust systems in place to manage this well and set high expectations for all pupils, including those who speak no or very little English. You do not use this as an excuse, but rather a critical factor in how you design and implement the curriculum. This enabling way of working ensures that these pupils do make progress, sometimes in a different way, both academically and socially.

- Positive attitudes displayed by pupils stem from a staff team that is fully committed to developing the whole child. High expectations for all, using the 'growth mindset' philosophy, and analysing vulnerable pupils' mental health needs underpin the exceptional behaviour and commitment to learning displayed by the pupils. It is clear to see the pride that pupils have in their work, their school and the opportunities they are given. In addition, families benefit from whole-school trips to promote social integration within the diverse community, and from Elsie, the adorable school dog who is training as a reading and play therapy dog. She is already making a positive difference to many pupils' lives.
- Many children enter the early years provision with skills which are significantly below those typically seen for their age. An experienced and committed team of professionals ensures that children access the support and help they need to promote their learning and engagement. Early identification of children's needs ensures that activities will motivate and inspire them, particularly the boys who find learning more challenging. Given such low starting points, most children make rapid progress and the proportion of pupils attaining a good level of development has improved over time.
- Pupils are developing their writing well, and are given opportunities throughout the curriculum to practise their newly acquired skills to good effect, as well as having focused time to edit and improve further. Creative links to topics alongside focused educational visits and high-quality texts used in lessons are contributing to pupils now making better progress.
- New strategies, recently introduced to improve pupils' reading skills, include teaching reading in a cumulative and structured way and challenging vocabulary activities. This followed disappointing outcomes in 2017, when it appeared that some pupils' progress stalled in key stage 2. However, many of those pupils joined the school without any grasp of the English language. They had progressed well across early years and key stage 1, developing their phonological and basic reading skills, but they lacked the vocabulary to ensure that they could infer and deduce, particularly against time limits. Staff have visited other schools to look at their systems, and have designed a programme to suit their own specific needs to address this. It is early days and further work is needed to make sure that all pupils progress swiftly across key stage 2.
- Leaders recognise, and have started to address, weaknesses in the teaching and acquisition of mathematical concepts. A 'small-steps' approach to calculation, using techniques such as question stems and new resources, is beginning to make a difference. The mathematics leader is in the very early stages of implementing the 'concrete, pictorial and abstract' strategy into the curriculum for all pupils. Acknowledging that this approach is very new, the initial signs are positive, and there is evidence that it is starting to help pupils make faster progress. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils in upper key stage 2, however not so much for those

less able and the most able pupils in lower key stage 2. Combining this with activities to become 'times-table rock stars', most pupils are engaged and motivated to learn and deepen their understanding. As with reading, this must remain firmly at the heart of the school's key priorities for all pupils.

- Staff are afforded many professional development opportunities to develop and craft their teaching to meet a challenging and diverse school population. They have worked with consultants during training sessions, and have had time to plan alongside them to make sure they fully understand how the principles are implemented in the classrooms. This approach has ensured that teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge and skill have continued to improve over time.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement to the teaching of reading continues, so that a higher proportion of pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education
- further opportunities are provided for pupils to deepen their understanding in mathematics, particularly in problem-solving and reasoning
- the less able and the most able pupils in lower key stage 2 are supported more effectively to make faster progress in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow  
**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the quality of education and impact of leaders. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books to consider the progress being made by pupils currently in school. I reviewed school documentation and information, including policies, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met pupils, in addition to four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a senior representative from the local authority, and analysed reports from external consultants. I met with parents and took into account Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.