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Mrs J Longworth  
Headteacher  
Bowerham Primary & Nursery School  
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Dear Mrs Longworth

### **Short inspection of Bowerham Primary & Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 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 and marked improvement 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.

You lead with passion and an unwavering commitment to provide the very best possible education for the pupils in your care. Your enthusiasm is shared by leaders at all levels. This, coupled with very effective staff development, has led to high-quality learning throughout the school.

Governors share your dedication and high expectations. They have a clear understanding of the strategic role that they play in the leadership of the school. As a result of the broad range of information provided to governors by leaders, they are able to support and challenge the school in a highly effective manner.

Your pupils are an absolute credit to you. They greatly value the many opportunities that you provide for them to contribute to school improvement. This is undertaken through groups such as the sports council, arts council, eco-committee and a newspaper council. Within the classroom, 'learning champions' ensure that all pupils have a clear choice in many aspects of their learning. For example, in Year 4, as part of your 'you asked... we did' initiative, pupils chose a particular author for their

class reader. They then undertook a vote for their favourite book by that author to study. Beyond the classroom, prefects and play leaders take great pride in guiding and offering support to younger pupils. Your 'pupil senior leadership team' meets with adult leaders to reflect the views of these many groups. As a consequence of this focused approach to developing a 'pupil voice', you have created learners who are enthusiastic about their learning and demonstrate very high levels of positive behaviour and engagement.

You have created a learning environment which is stimulating and exciting. Outdoor spaces enhance the learning of pupils. Teachers display a broad array of high-quality work around school and an engaging library fosters pupils' love of reading.

The parents I spoke to were very positive about the school. They note that their children are offered a high level of challenge in their learning and that the curriculum is very interesting. A typical view, reflected by one parent was, 'This is a dynamic school. There are lots of opportunities to do new things.'

You were asked at the last inspection to improve further the quality of teaching by using information about pupils' progress to ensure that work is set at the correct level. This has been addressed most successfully. You have introduced a detailed assessment and tracking system across the curriculum. This allows teachers to accurately measure pupils' progress and set work at an appropriate level. You have created a 'choice and challenge' curriculum. This enables pupils to undertake challenges at increasingly difficult levels. As a consequence, pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Learning is brisk across the curriculum: pupils feel fully involved in the process and proud of their achievements.

You were also asked by inspectors to improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and the overall presentation of their work. Much progress has been made in this area. This is because English leaders provide support for teachers and monitor the impact of this closely. Teachers follow your presentation policy when setting work and there is a clear progression of skills from the very earliest mark making in Nursery to the neat, legible script in Year 6. Pupils note that they are very proud of the work they produce in their books. They are equally proud of the high standard of handwriting that is on display around school.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support the school's improvement. You are aware, from the school's most recent published performance information, that the attainment of a small percentage of middle-ability pupils in mathematics at the higher level is below that of English at key stage 2. Additionally, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the higher standards at the end of key stage 2 remains below the national average in writing and below the expected and higher levels in mathematics.

## **Safeguarding is effective**

You provide governors and staff with a broad range of training. This includes training in the 'Prevent' duty and online safety. This ensures that they are able to keep pupils safe. Your procedures are thorough and you keep detailed records relating to the safety of pupils. Your school site is safe and secure. Staff ensure that the identity of visitors is checked on entry to the school. Parents are very grateful for the level of care that is provided for their children. A typical view, noted on Parent view, Ofsted's online questionnaire was, 'This is a fabulous school with very strong leadership and a team of staff who care very deeply about the children.'

Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to learn how to stay safe. Pupils particularly value the fact that, in their words, 'We are kept mentally safe.' They talk with pride about their 'trust buddies'. These are members of staff chosen by pupils as 'buddies'. The buddies offer support and advice when pupils are experiencing emotions that they struggle to deal with alone.

## **Inspection findings**

- Your detailed evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for further development meant that my findings were no surprise to you. You work in a highly strategic and effective manner with leaders, staff and pupils to provide an exciting and enriching curriculum for all pupils in school. Consequently, school improvement is brisk.
- At the start of the inspection, I shared with you a number of key lines of enquiry. The first considered the ways in which leaders ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of, and respect for, a wide range of faiths and cultures. This is an area that leaders value greatly. Your curriculum is broad and balanced. It ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths. Teachers make sure that, woven through this teaching, are the school's core values of courage, appreciation, simplicity, tolerance, humility and hope.
- The pupils I spoke to during the inspection demonstrated an exemplary understanding of fundamental British values and were able to explain how these were reflected in their curriculum. For example, pupils explained that they developed their awareness of individual liberty through their involvement in the design of their day-to-day learning. Pupils said, 'We choose how we learn.'
- The next area we looked at considered ways in which leaders and teachers were supporting middle-ability pupils to reach higher levels in mathematics. This is because published information on achievement at the end of key stage 2 shows that the proportion of this group of pupils reaching the higher levels is lower than seen nationally. Your leaders are aware of this issue and have acted on it immediately. A new system for teaching mathematics has been introduced. This enables pupils to develop their reasoning about mathematics. It also provides regular opportunities for problem-solving, which pupils are undertaking with increasing levels of confidence. Although not fully embedded, leaders are aware that progress for this group is beginning to improve.
- Your 'choice and challenge' curriculum ensures that all pupils, including the

middle-ability group, receive challenge at a high level in mathematics. As a consequence, the school's own assessment tracking shows that the performance of this group is increasing. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that more time is required to ensure that the new system of teaching is fully embedded throughout key stages 1 and 2.

- The final area we looked at was how disadvantaged pupils are being supported to achieve at a higher level in writing, phonics and mathematics. Once again, leaders are aware of this issue and taking effective steps to address it. To support the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils, you ensure that their progress is closely tracked and learning opportunities are carefully crafted so that appropriate levels of challenge are provided.
- Your school has levels of mobility which are higher than those seen nationally. As a consequence, many new pupils enter your school throughout each year. You have identified that this is particularly challenging for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, high-quality transition procedures have been put into place. This ensures that pupils are able to meet the high expectations in learning.
- Leaders provide teachers and teaching assistants with a broad range of very effective training to support their ability to question and to set increasingly higher levels of challenge for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, leaders, including your local authority improvement adviser, note that pupils' performance is improving year on year. However, your own evaluation highlights a need to provide disadvantaged pupils with a wider range of learning opportunities based on real-life experiences so that the purpose of learning is much clearer to them. Your leaders accurately identify that this will involve working even more closely with parents and carers.
- Since the previous inspection, you have introduced provision for two-year-old children. This has helped to provide a good start for children. Your early years leader has crafted an environment which is highly stimulating and conducive to learning. Areas are separated into bays to support learning across the curriculum and display is used effectively to excite and engage children. Your changing facilities and nap areas are of a high standard. During the inspection, very young children were able to talk with confidence and understanding about 'Tiny T' – their class tortoise. This environment provides a broad range of enrichment which sparks children's curiosity and excitement about learning. As a result, children begin their school experience in a highly effective manner.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of middle-ability pupils are further developed by fully embedding the new system of teaching in mathematics throughout key stages 1 and 2
- working together with parents and carers, opportunities are explored for disadvantaged pupils to develop their learning through a broader range of 'real-life experiences'.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the assistant headteacher, leaders for English and mathematics and your school's local authority improvement adviser. I had a formal discussion with a group of 19 pupils and met with your office manager. I also spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day and met with a group of staff to discuss their views on safeguarding, staff training and curriculum development.

Accompanied by you, I visited all year groups in the school except year 3, who were not in school. I observed learning and spoke with pupil learning champions. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children, the school's self-evaluation, and improvement plan and assessment information. I also took account of the 86 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and considered information posted on the school's website.