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Mrs Nichola Irving
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Irving

Short inspection of Horton Grange Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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. Good-quality teaching and learning have been sustained effectively and improved further. You have demonstrated determination and energy in eradicating any element of underperformance, an ambition shared by the whole school community. As a result of careful strategic planning, shrewd appointments and the effective deployment of staff, leadership systems are reinvigorated and revitalised. The main aspects of school performance are overseen by skilled and hardworking senior leaders, demonstrating a strong sense of teamwork and openness to share the very best practice. As a result, there is a consistent approach to teaching, which is quickly accelerating the rates of progress that all pupils make in their learning, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. You acknowledge that standards of attainment reached by disadvantaged pupils still lag behind other pupils nationally.

Children are getting off to a fast start in their learning in the early years. As a result of highly effective leadership and improvements to the quality of provision, which include enhanced learning environments, children thrive. Careful analysis of the needs of all children allows adults to plan and adapt activities that develop children's early reading skills and understanding of number. Children are ready to make a flying start to Year 1. Leaders are skilled in evaluating the quality of teaching across the rest of school, and the effect that it has on pupils' rates of progress in their learning. This analysis is key in adapting and modifying tasks and activities to provide the very best opportunities for all pupils to fulfil their potential.

You have ensured that areas for development identified in the previous inspection before your appointment have been dealt with successfully. There are clear improvements in boys' writing in key stage 1, with standards of handwriting and presentation much improved. Pupils understand clearly how to succeed in tasks set, and how they could improve further. They are becoming skilled at evaluating the quality of their own work and whether they have met key criteria for success.

You have ensured that pupils' personal development and well-being are extremely well supported, and this is a cornerstone of the school's vision and its success. This is exemplified by pupils' excellent standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know the school's key values stemming from the acronym for HORTON and endeavour to live up to them. There are well-established systems to support any pupils who are upset, worried or distressed. The role played by the social and emotional base and its talented and respected staff is key, ensuring that pupils are ready to learn, with no issue blocking their path to success.

You have also made improving pupils' rates of attendance a priority, including reducing the number of unauthorised absences due to holidays in term time. A number of actions, led effectively by the attendance lead and supported by the family support guidance and welfare officer, have improved the rates of attendance by the end of the last academic year. You acknowledge that there is still some way to go before current rates of attendance and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, especially of the disadvantaged, match those found nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Under the watchful eye of all staff at your inclusive school, supported highly effectively by staff in the social and emotional support base, no stone is left unturned in ensuring that all pupils are safe and have opportunities to thrive. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety. Pupils have full trust in their teachers and teaching assistants who look after them, and report feeling safe all of the time.

Given the size of the school, you have ensured that six adults have completed the designated person for safeguarding training. Policies, procedures and records are of high quality, regularly updated by the school business manager and checked regularly by the local authority school improvement partner. Staff and governor training is thorough and up to date, including training to ensure that recruitment procedures are watertight. Registers of staff training are completed diligently. Access to well-written policies and guidance ensure that all adults have a secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Inspection findings

- Your skilful leadership has ensured that systems and structures are well established, enabling key leaders to oversee, support and evaluate planned changes resulting from your strategic vision. You have created a team of staff,

including leaders and governors, who are motivated and engaged, and in which morale is high. Devolving leadership responsibility with accountability has invigorated and strengthened leadership across the school. The role played by the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and phase leaders has been pivotal in ensuring a sharp focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Distributed leadership has given teachers access to school improvement planning and prepares them well for taking up leadership roles in the future. Governors are extremely well informed, bring a range of transferable professional skills and are equally ambitious to see pupils thrive.

- The effects of significant change, talented and strong leadership and a focus on enabling children to excel are being seen in the early years. High-quality provision for two-year-olds ensures that these children can work and play happily together, taking turns. They are very well prepared to start Nursery, developing mark-making skills, able to show manners and developing positive attitudes to being in school. This high-quality provision continues through Nursery and on into Reception, with an increasing focus on number, writing and reading. In the Reception class, a group of children were writing enthusiastically about what could be inside a wrapped present. Their handwriting was neat, and lengthy sentences punctuated correctly. Children are making rapid progress in their learning. The proportion reaching a good level of development has increased year-on-year since 2014, and now matches that found nationally.
- You have ensured that there is a consistency of approach to all aspects of teaching across the school. Leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' learning. Pupils' achievements are assessed accurately, and plans immediately put into place for any pupils at risk of falling behind. There is a shared determination to see all pupils thrive and achieve the best that they can. As a result, the rates of progress made by all pupils are accelerating quickly, with a large majority working at levels expected for their age. This strong progress includes that for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. You acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils' attainment is not yet as high as that for other pupils nationally. Work in pupils' books shows excellent productivity, good standards of presentation and emerging skills of self-evaluation for all pupils. The quality of work seen in pupils' topic books matches that in mathematics and English books. A wide range of subjects across the curriculum are studied, with a clear focus on subject-specific skills which are assessed and tracked.
- You have ensured that relationships in school are strong and there are high levels of trust between adults and pupils. As a result, safeguarding is highly effective. You have worked hard to put the school's work to foster pupils' personal development and welfare at the very heart of all the school does. All staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils are polite, caring, considerate and friendly to each other and to visitors, demonstrating exemplary attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour. The work of the staff in the social and emotional base is instrumental in attending to the wider personal development of pupils, addressing any issues that may prevent them from reaching their full potential. Pupils speak clearly about the need to attend school regularly to ensure not a moment is lost to learn, and check the display regarding attendance regularly. The work of the attendance lead and the family

support, guidance and welfare officer is already resulting in improved rates of attendance, but they still fall below those found nationally, especially for the disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current strategies and planned actions continue to diminish the differences in the standards of attainment achieved by disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils nationally and in school
- school systems and actions continue to improve pupils' rates of attendance and reduce persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils, so that they at least match those found nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the attendance and pupil premium lead teacher and the three phase leaders. I also met with the school business manager and the family support, guidance and welfare officer. In addition, I met a group of governors and the local authority school improvement partner. Alongside you and the deputy headteacher, I visited lessons in the two-year-old provision and lessons in each key stage. I reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks and spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school development plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and recording of current pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised pupils' achievement in the 2016 and 2017 statutory assessments, the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, and the school's website.