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Mrs Keeley Wilson
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of Luddenham 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 February 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 your appointment as headteacher, you have worked effectively to build a new team of leaders and staff who are ambitious to raise standards and improve outcomes for all pupils. You have accurately identified aspects of teaching, learning and assessment which need to improve. You have introduced new practices, which are already helping pupils of all abilities to learn well. For example, you have improved provision in the early years, after a period of decline, although more remains to be done. Similarly, mathematics teaching has improved, although some pupils still have gaps in their understanding.

Many parents and carers raised concerns about the large numbers of changes to staffing over the last few years, and the impact these have had on their children. However, the majority of those responding to the online survey, Parent View, recognised the positive impact of the new leadership team. They have confidence that the new staff team is being well led, and that their children are now making better progress.

Pupils are happy and confident. They appreciate the wide range of experiences within school and enjoy outdoor activities at breaktime, lunchtime and in forest school. They are polite and have good relationships with their teachers. As a result, they respond promptly to teachers' instructions and learn well. They enjoy the

rewards which promote better learning. In particular, they enjoy the VIP teas with the headteacher and particularly the hot chocolate. They know that they will receive this special invitation if they are committed to demonstrating school values. They said that, 'The headteacher knows everyone by name', 'Teachers make learning fun' and 'Everyone gets along very well'.

The previous inspection report indicated that writing should be improved by providing the most able pupils, especially boys, with more challenging tasks promptly when they had grasped a concept or skill. Writing is now taught more systematically and consistently and, as a result, all pupils have improved their skills. However, further work is still needed to provide greater and more consistent challenge for the most able. In addition, pupils have too few opportunities to write at depth or in different subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and school leaders work together effectively. They ensure that all policies and procedures are in place in order to keep pupils safe. You have made significant changes to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that all staff are well trained. They all know how to recognise risks and raise concerns.

Since your appointment, you have made the school site secure. School leaders make sure pupils arrive and leave school safely through the use of an effective car-queue system.

Pupils recognise that they are well cared for at all times. They said that there is no bullying or discriminatory behaviour and that they can always trust adults to help them. They are able to describe actions taken to keep them safe, including fire drills and safe use of the internet.

You work effectively with the local authority to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. You support the attendance of those who are at risk of persistent absence. For example, you extend the care you give to include collecting children using a minibus, and providing breakfast.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the quality of early years provision; the opportunities that pupils have to engage in writing across the curriculum and to work at greater depth in writing; and teaching and outcomes in mathematics.
- The provision in early years was strong at the time of the last inspection, but there has been a decline in outcomes since then. Fewer children have been well prepared to start Year 1 than in the past. Since your appointment, you have accurately identified aspects of early years provision which were not good enough, and have acted rapidly to address these.

- You have developed the outside area for early years and engaged a specialist consultant to support and advise the new class teacher. Children enjoy learning and play well together. Although adults monitor children's development regularly, they do not always use this information effectively to plan activities. As a result, some children do not develop new knowledge and skills quickly enough across all areas of learning.
- Leaders have taken successful action to improve the teaching of writing. A new approach to teaching has been introduced and teachers have received additional training to improve their skills. This has led to greater consistency in teaching and learning. More pupils are now working at the expected standard for their age. However, pupils do not all have enough opportunities to write at greater depth, or to extend their writing skills in other subjects.
- Leaders have introduced a well-planned strategy to develop basic skills in mathematics and increase opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils are now making better progress, but this is not yet rapid enough to close historical gaps for some pupils. Teachers provide a good range of appropriate and developmental tasks but starting points for the most able pupils are not always high enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to use and apply writing skills across the curriculum, and to write at greater depth
- new strategies to develop mathematical skills are refined so that pupils make rapid progress, regardless of their starting points
- staff in the early years help children to make faster progress, by preparing activities that are better matched to their needs and levels of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, you and I observed learning across the whole school. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I met with senior leaders and held a meeting and phone call with governors. I spoke to pupils and examined work in

their books. I considered 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 73 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, including 44 free-text comments. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including: information about pupils' achievement and attendance; the school improvement plan; evidence of monitoring visits; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.