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Mrs Julia Armstrong
Headteacher
Hartburn Primary School
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Dear Mrs Armstrong

Short inspection of Hartburn Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Karine Hendley HMI, 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival in 2015, you have provided inspirational leadership that has raised expectations across the school community. With your deputy headteacher, you have strengthened leadership capacity at all levels and sustained a consistent focus on the quality of teaching and learning. New leaders are taking increasing responsibility for leading improvement strategies and for measuring the impact of new initiatives. Your development of staff has been underpinned by strong systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the rate of pupils' progress. These actions have contributed to significant improvements in pupils' outcomes.

With your deputy headteacher, you have developed the leadership skills of subject and phase leaders. You ensure that the quality of teaching is thoroughly checked by combining middle leaders' observations of learning with close scrutiny of pupils' work and progress. You have introduced much stronger systems of accountability, both to reward strong performance and to challenge and support less successful practice. Your appointment of a specialist data manager supports teachers' planning successfully. It ensures that teachers have swift access to progress information to help them plan their teaching and any additional support for pupils. You invite teachers to regular meetings with senior, subject and phase leaders to review the progress of the pupils in their classes. You review your own performance with the same rigour that you apply to your wider team. You openly invite additional scrutiny and reviews from the local authority and external partners to gain objective insight into the effect of your improvement strategies.

You and your team have responded extremely well to the demands of the new national curriculum. You have worked with your team to raise expectations and the level of challenge, contributing to rapid improvements in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Pupils made outstanding progress in writing and mathematics, with achievement in mathematics in the top 1% of schools nationally. Progress in reading was also strong, although the proportions at greater depth were not as significant. You and your team also secured much stronger outcomes for pupils in key stage 1, with the proportions of pupils achieving and exceeding expected standards above those seen nationally. Current progress shows that the rapid improvements secured in 2017 are being sustained in the majority of year groups. While progress is more rapid at key stage 2, teachers are now building more swiftly upon the strong outcomes in the early years to accelerate further pupils' progress at key stage 1.

These improvements have been built upon major improvements in the quality of teaching. You have encouraged teachers and pupils to embrace challenge. Pupils enjoy their learning and actively discuss solutions to problems. Year 6 pupils demonstrate a mature awareness of their targets and the steps they can take to improve. Much learning is rigorous and effectively planned, while also enabling pupils to respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment. You have developed strong routines in lessons alongside a range of prompts that encourage pupils' independence as learners. Pupils are given a degree of choice in the tasks they undertake and are frequently encouraged to solve more difficult tasks. As a consequence, an increasing proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth of understanding.

You and your team are committed to professional development and ongoing improvement. You have established an outward-facing ethos, where teachers develop practice and moderate standards in partnership with local schools. You encourage your staff to explore new approaches to learning, while asking that they evaluate the effect of these strategies. You regularly work with local schools and the local authority to check the accuracy of standards. Your dedicated data manager ensures that there is a consistent focus upon current progress. This enables teachers to modify their planning and arrange interventions to address any emerging underachievement. The rigour and regularity of these checks are contributing to rapid improvement.

Governors are committed to the ethos of the school and have the necessary expertise to hold leaders to account. They welcome the heightened levels of accountability you have established since your arrival. Governors now feel that they are actively encouraged to challenge and ask searching questions. They attend pupils' progress meetings and invite both senior and middle leaders to account for pupils' outcomes. By discussing progress directly with key staff, governors are developing a much better picture of the story that lies behind the data they receive. Governors closely track the impact of pupil premium funding and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to diminish differences for disadvantaged pupils. In addition to this heightened challenge, governors also provide valuable support. The strong systems that you have brought to the school are also enriching the effectiveness of governance and building further capacity for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders make thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school and are suitably trained in safer recruitment. Leaders commission support from attendance officers to support high rates of attendance. School leaders and members of the governing body undergo appropriate training to enable them to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. Governors complete a regular audit of safeguarding practice. Leaders also ensure that staff receive up-to-date training on a range of safeguarding issues.

Pupils spoken with say that they feel safe in school, and the vast majority of their parents and carers agree. They could talk clearly about the actions the headteacher has taken to improve site security. They say that bullying is rare and that staff are effective in addressing any potential instances of bullying. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- You and your team have instilled a culture of higher expectations and strengthened the curriculum, so that challenge is embedded in the learning culture of the school. Pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning, exploring problems with their partners and regularly reflecting upon their learning. There is a demonstrable energy and purpose to much learning at the school.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics through consistently strong teaching that enables pupils to embrace complex tasks with confidence. Pupils demonstrate considerable maturity in their understanding and explanation of mathematical methods. They regularly apply their mathematical understanding to a range of problems.
- You and your team have led significant improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. Clear routines are established from the early years onwards to develop handwriting and pupils' understanding of different sentence types. Pupils effectively use a range of techniques in their extended writing. These strategies enabled pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Leaders are introducing new schemes to accelerate pupils' progress in reading. Pupils are given regular opportunities to question and explore a range of texts. These approaches are contributing to good progress, although some of these new approaches are not as securely embedded as those in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in subjects such as science and the humanities is not as strong as in English and mathematics, because they are not given as regular opportunities to work at a greater depth in these subjects.
- Leaders have strengthened the curriculum at key stage 1 to support more rapid progress. The proportion of pupils working at a greater depth of understanding

has shown a consistent improvement, and standards are above those seen nationally.

- Leaders have developed a rich learning environment in the early years that enables children to make extremely strong progress. Teachers and teaching assistants develop purposeful activities that capture children's interest and enthusiasm in their learning and play. Much practice in the Nursery is exemplary, with extremely well-designed tasks and resources that support the development of children's language and social skills.
- The deputy headteacher has developed a rigorous strategy to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. She ensures that teachers are aware of potential barriers to learning and works with teachers on a range of strategies to support progress. These actions enabled disadvantaged pupils to make very strong progress at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, although some differences in progress and attendance remain.
- You and your team have brought in significant changes to promote the inclusion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities within the curriculum. Clear systems are in place to support and monitor the progress of these pupils in the classroom. Some of these new approaches are not fully developed, and variation remains in pupils' progress from their starting points between year groups.
- You have provided a stimulating wider curriculum, where pupils benefit from a diverse range of experiences. Pupils have access to a range of competitive sports, achieving considerable success in a wide range of competitions. Pupils also enjoy a variety of cultural experiences in the performing arts and choir, with over 70 pupils rehearsing for a school production on the day of inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- embed new approaches to reading, so that the sustained and substantial progress pupils have made in mathematics and writing is replicated in their reading
- develop the wider curriculum, so that the very strong progress that pupils make in writing and mathematics is reflected in other subjects such as science, geography and history
- further enhance new systems to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to promote their progress across all year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors explored whether the strong rates of progress in writing and mathematics achieved at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 are evident in other year groups. We explored the actions of leaders to accelerate progress in reading. We also looked at the progress of pupils in key stage 1 and wider provision in the early years foundation stage. We talked to leaders and governors about the impact of the pupil premium strategy

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders. We also spoke to three members of the governing body, including the chair. We held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. We talked to the educational development partner from the local authority. We looked at learning in lessons with you and your deputy headteacher. We also scrutinised pupils' work in books and folders. We examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records and assessment information. We examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record. We took into account 79 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and 38 parental free-text responses. We also took into account 78 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.