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Mrs Laura Baggett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Baggett

Short inspection of Monkhouse Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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. Despite the many changes of staff in the last three years, you have successfully built on the strengths of the school, such as the strong performance in mathematics. You have systematically tackled any shortcomings. When performance in reading dipped in 2016, action was swiftly taken to ensure that standards rose in 2017. The school's effectiveness has been maintained because you, with the support of your senior colleagues and governors, have created a culture where all staff are given the opportunity to succeed, have a 'can do' attitude and are committed to continuous improvement. The sense of teamwork and mutual support among staff is exceptionally strong. Those who are new to the school are given carefully tailored support by experienced colleagues so that they quickly become integrated and effective in their roles.

You and your team regularly check the progress of pupils through sampling their work in books, making visits to classrooms and observing teaching. You use this information to act promptly, providing pupils with additional 'master classes', which supports them to maintain good progress. Your monitoring also helps to pinpoint where staff would benefit from additional support to refine their teaching and, consequently, teaching continues to improve.

Parents and carers recognise that you and your team are passionately committed to ensuring that each child in your care flourishes and you take pride in valuing the contribution every child can make. You rightly celebrate the high academic standards that most pupils achieve but also give equal importance to ensuring that pupils feel good about themselves and overcome any social and emotional difficulties they may experience. You

are keen to ensure that pupils enjoy all aspects of school life.

The determination of you and your team to ensure that the curriculum ignites pupils' interest and engagement has been extremely successful. Classrooms are adapted termly to reflect the project being studied so that the changes spark pupils' immediate interest and curiosity. For example, in one corner of a classroom there is a large replica of an earthquake-damaged building, which is the stimulus for a theme aimed at exploring natural disasters. In the classrooms you and I visited during the inspection, pupils demonstrated high levels of cooperation, collaboration and commitment as they worked. One pupil I spoke to echoed a common attitude among his peers when he said, 'I like to challenge myself.'

Governors are extremely proud of the school and demonstrate the same desire for self-improvement that staff do. They have a very good strategic overview of the school's needs and consequently are prepared to make bold decisions they believe will benefit the school. The development of the Nursery class is one such example. New governors are carefully recruited and deployed to ensure that their skills are used well. Governors have a deep knowledge of the school as a result of their regular visits and the detailed reports provided by staff. They ask you and your team probing questions to ensure that the actions you take are appropriate and effective.

You and your team have largely tackled the areas for improvement from the last inspection. The quality of handwriting and presentation is consistently high across the school in all subjects. In the majority of classes, there is more consistent challenge for the most able pupils and proportions attaining the higher standard were above average in all subjects in key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2017. In mathematics, for example, the introduction of a systematic approach, which requires pupils to explain and prove their mathematical understanding, provides very effective challenge in most classes. Where the challenge is not as consistent, action is being taken to ensure that it improves.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. School systems to ensure pupils' safety are thorough, applied consistently and regularly checked by governors. All staff are clear about the procedures they should follow if there are concerns about a child, and careful records are maintained. You work well with external agencies where it is required. Staff training is up to date, and you provide regular briefings to ensure that staff are updated and refreshed. Those who are new to the school receive individual support to understand the relevant procedures.

Pupils behave very well and feel safe in school. Behaviour in the classroom, in corridors and at playtimes is very good. Pupils are mature and sensible, taking responsibility for lunchtime clubs such as the Play Maker Space. Pupils reported that there are few incidents of poor behaviour and that name-calling is rare. They said that any incidents which occur are dealt with swiftly. School records and parents endorse the view that the school is safe for pupils. Pupils said that there is always someone to talk to if they have a concern. They have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They could recall the dangers of electricity, how to cross the road safely, railway safety and how to stay safe in

the sea. They have a good knowledge of the dangers of using the internet and what they should do to keep themselves safe, such as not giving their name or address to strangers.

Inspection findings

- A new Nursery class opened in September 2017. The experienced teacher has established effective routines and, as a result, the Nursery is calm and purposeful. Children are confident to move around the space and they have good relationships with each other. Adults support them well, guiding them to develop their understanding and extend their play through careful questioning. Children are encouraged to choose their own resources and think about how they will use them. However, the routines and organisation in the Reception class do not yet build effectively on those which are newly established in the Nursery class. Sometimes, more is demanded of the younger children than of those who are older. For example, younger children are expected to independently find and read their own name card at the beginning of the day, whereas older children are not.
- Although standards in writing at the end of the early years foundation stage were in line with the national average in 2017, they were higher than this in reading and mathematics. The work scrutiny I conducted with the deputy headteacher and senior teacher in early years indicated that children make progress in their writing and start to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds. However, leaders have already recognised that progress in writing is hampered because children do not have enough opportunities to write and compose sentences. Instead, writing practice focuses on tasks which aim to develop handwriting skills, which are sometimes not appropriate for children's capabilities.
- The writing of key stage 1 pupils that we looked at was frequent but in short passages and often non-fiction pieces. Consequently, pupils do not build up writing skills in a logical sequence because they have too few opportunities to write longer stories. Pupils do not have the chance to address the mistakes they have made or apply the skills they have been taught. This has hampered the progress of the most able pupils, in particular, who have the capability to write more. Having identified this concern, leaders have organised training for staff to support more effective teaching of writing.
- The use of pupil premium funding is effective. You and your team know individual pupils and their families very well. You are aware of the challenges that each pupil needs to overcome in order to succeed. You put in place measures to overcome these difficulties and carefully evaluate whether they have been successful. These actions have contributed to this group of pupils making good progress. In 2017, an above-average proportion reached the expected standard in key stage 1 and in the early years foundation stage. However, you acknowledge that further work is needed to ensure that a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils reach the higher standards of attainment in these key stages, particularly in writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities which support learning and development in the Nursery class are

effectively built on in the Reception class to ensure that all children are effectively challenged

- there are more frequent opportunities to compose writing in the early years and key stage 1, so that progress is accelerated and more disadvantaged pupils, in particular, reach the higher standard in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Waugh
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the senior teacher in early years. I also met groups of teachers and teaching assistants. You and I visited lessons in most classes. I met with a group of three governors and a representative from the local authority. Some pupils read their work and discussed it with me. I spoke with pupils about views of the school, including their views of pupils' behaviour. I looked in pupils' workbooks when in lessons. I also conducted a work scrutiny with the deputy headteacher and senior teacher in early years. I considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental survey. I also reviewed the 59 online pupil responses and the 22 staff survey responses to Ofsted's questionnaires. Various documents were considered, relating to safeguarding, teaching and governance. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments and I looked at the school's website.