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Mr Ray Bushby  
Headteacher  
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Princess Road  
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County Durham  
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Dear Mr Bushby

### **Short inspection of Seaham Trinity Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 October 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and other leaders in the school demonstrate a strong commitment to your pupils and to your community. Since the last inspection, standards achieved by pupils have remained consistently above those seen nationally. In reading and mathematics in particular, pupils have consistently made significantly more progress than national averages and your disadvantaged pupils, who make up nearly half of the school's population, have attained more highly than other pupils nationally. Despite this, there is no sense of complacency. You and other leaders check rigorously on all aspects of the school's performance and consequently you have an accurate and realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Following the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that the quality of teaching was consistently good and to develop the skills of subject leaders, so that standards across the wider curriculum were as good as those seen in reading, writing and mathematics. Much has been done since then. Some new teachers have been recruited and there are good arrangements in place to provide teachers with bespoke coaching and training. I found teachers to hold high expectations and to be very precise in explaining and modelling what they want pupils to achieve.

Subject leadership is also developing well. After the last inspection, you formed a working group to study the changes made to the national curriculum and collectively developed the themes and topics you felt were essential areas of knowledge. Your curriculum rationale is centred on pupils being provided with, and

having, as many opportunities as possible to learn first-hand, through visits to local places of interest. Younger pupils have many opportunities to learn outdoors and there are good facilities designed to stimulate their senses. Older pupils benefit from a wide range of visits to enrich their understanding of the world. More recently, subject leaders have carefully considered how pupils' progress across the wider curriculum should be assessed. As a result, teachers' planning and design of lessons are more effectively focused on developing the specific skills intrinsic to different subjects.

Although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above average, fewer pupils than average have attained the higher standards possible in reading, writing and mathematics. You have identified this as an area for improvement and expect to see improvements when the national curriculum tests are completed this summer. Sharp performance management targets have been set for teachers, pupils with the potential to attain the higher standards have been identified and additional teaching is being provided to help these pupils hone their skills. A new approach to the teaching of mathematics has been introduced and is being thoughtfully rolled out across the school. However, it remains necessary to keep checking that teaching across each year group is sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils.

An example of your proactive leadership can be seen in the actions you have taken to improve the effectiveness of governance, which had become passive and too accepting of the information you provided. You commissioned an external review by the local authority which precipitated a number of changes of personnel. Since then, the re-shaped governing body has undertaken extensive training, skilfully overseen by the deputy headteacher. Although still a work in progress, the governing body has begun to provide better scrutiny. However, governors now need to display more ambition and challenge if they are to achieve their aim of the school providing an outstanding quality of education.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders systematically review the quality of safeguarding arrangements annually and act quickly to address any areas that need improving. Staff training is up to date and members of staff fully understand leaders' message that 'urgency is key' if they identify a concern.

Leaders keep appropriate records of the actions they take when they act to protect a child. However, you do express some frustration with delays in some other agencies taking the necessary steps to protect children.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and trust adults to help them. They told me that bullying is rare and that, if it does happen, adults deal with it quickly. There are good arrangements in place for counselling. Pupils, and parents and carers, can book appointments to talk through their worries and many take up this opportunity.

## Inspection findings

- Your thoughtful leadership means that areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been addressed. The quality of teaching has improved. Teachers foster high expectations and challenge pupils to work hard. In Reception, standards have risen year on year. Children quickly develop phonics skills and use them confidently. Most pupils are capable readers by the end of Year 2. Across key stage 1, basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed well through precise teaching and careful modelling. Across the school, questioning is used well to probe pupils' grasp and to deepen their understanding. Good routines are in place for pupils to learn from teachers' marking and improve their work. Mathematics teaching is challenging and tests pupils' ability to apply their understanding in real-life situations. This more consistent picture of teaching is ensuring that pupils currently in the school are thriving academically. The most recent assessment information shows that outcomes this summer are on course to remain above those seen nationally, and this view is supported by the quality of work in pupils' books.
- The standard of work across other subjects has improved since the last inspection. In science, for example, where the subject leader has delivered science lessons across the age range, standards have improved markedly. Pupils have worked as young scientists, conducting practical experiments, and gathering and evaluating data to arrive at well-considered evaluations. Pupils' progress in history and geography is strong. Topics, such as the Ancient Greeks, are well planned. For example, pupils looked at the concept of democracy, comparing and contrasting government in Ancient Greece with modern-day Britain. Typically, topics covered across different subjects are studied in sufficient depth and detail for pupils to gain a rich understanding. Visits out of school to places of interest regularly enrich pupils' learning.
- Middle leadership is a growing strength of the school. Subject leaders share your commitment to ensuring that the curriculum meets pupils' needs and tackles the barrier of disadvantage. Their skills in curriculum design and in monitoring how well it is implemented are clearly evident. They too are not complacent and have detailed planning in place to refine provision further.
- Attendance is improving. This year to date, overall attendance is in line with last year's national average. There are also fewer pupils missing school regularly because of the consistent stance you have taken. During my visit, I found behaviour to be good in lessons and at social times. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons and share their ideas confidently.
- Governance is undergoing a period of transition. The new governing body, which includes several newly recruited members, has begun to reorganise. A helpful training programme, overseen by the deputy headteacher and the local authority, means that governors are now more aware of their role and responsibilities. However, governors are yet to demonstrate that they are making a difference. Further work is needed to build governors' roles into school improvement planning and to create a framework through which governors can evaluate whether the school is on course to achieve its vision.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is consistently challenging for the most able pupils, so that the proportion attaining the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at least matches that seen nationally
- the governing body is more ambitious for the school, plays a more active strategic role and holds leaders to account for improving the quality of education provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the inclusion manager, a group of subject leaders and three members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. I also met with a group of parents and a representative of the local authority. I held discussions with a group of pupils in key stage 2 and listened to some younger pupils read. I visited lessons in each phase of the school to look at the effect of your work to improve the quality of teaching. During lesson visits, I sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' work from across a broad range of subjects in order to evaluate the progress pupils have made over time. I took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, its policies and other information available on the school's website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, the quality and breadth of the school's curriculum and the quality of leadership and management, including governance. I also looked closely at your work to improve attendance and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.