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3 May 2018

Mrs Caroline Marshall  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Marshall

### **Short inspection of Marsden Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your inspirational and determined leadership has strengthened the school community, so much so that one parent commented that you have 'made a huge difference to the school and I feel confident that my children are supported to be the best they can be'. This is testimony to the fact that the school motto of 'Everyone Cares, Everyone Matters' is lived and breathed by leaders, staff, parents and carers, and pupils at Marsden Primary School.

You are ably supported, and complemented, by your deputy headteacher. Together, you share an excellent relationship and are a formidable team. You both have high aspirations for each child, and the commitment you both have to nurture each child's academic and personal development is to be commended. You both have a very candid and accurate view of the school's strengths and those areas that need attention to improve. This view is formed through regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and moderation of pupils' work.

You and other leaders are eager to make a difference. Leaders are well aware of their roles and responsibilities; because of this, they support each other very well. Together, you and other leaders have effectively supported staff to continually reflect on and improve their practice. You have a hard-working team of staff, and as a result staff morale is very high. Staff are committed and ambitious for pupils to achieve their very best. Alongside other leaders and staff, your actions have strengthened the quality of teaching across the school and, as a result, pupils

achieve well, enjoy their learning and thrive throughout their time at Marsden Primary School.

You and other leaders are realistic and reflective. This has ensured that your school improvement plan is precise and detailed. It details clearly the areas that need further attention so that the school continues to improve and strengthen. For example, you are determined to sustain and improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stages 1 and 2, and you are working with staff to ensure that challenge is sufficient for all pupils so that more achieve at greater depth, particularly by the end of key stage 2. You and other leaders show, in abundance, a resolute determination to improve the areas that need the most attention.

Governors are passionate and committed to the school. They have a wide range of skills and expertise, and regularly and robustly hold leaders to account for the progress and attainment of pupils. Governor links are proving successful in giving individual governors and the wider governing body insightful knowledge and understanding of specific areas of the school's work. For example, pupil premium spending is regularly reviewed in relation to what is working and what is not. Governors are ambitious for the school, the children that attend the school and the contribution that the school makes to the local community. As a group, they are extremely effective in their roles.

The atmosphere of the school is calm, orderly and respectful. Pupils' sense of belonging and pride to be part of the school community are infectious and tangible. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad, balanced and enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. For example, pupils speak enthusiastically about the range of trips, visits and after-school clubs they are able to take part in. Pupils speak fondly of the new library and are grateful for this addition to the school, so that they can access a wide range of reading materials. Pupils say that they feel encouraged and supported in their reading and enjoy regularly sharing their stories with an adult.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally strong. Pupils are consistently well behaved, polite and show an eagerness to learn and participate in their learning. Pupils show high levels of tolerance and respect for others. They are confident and they are supportive of one another. Every pupil at the school is eager to please and achieve their very best.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and other leaders, supported by all staff, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Marsden Primary School. You have ensured that procedures are clear and staff are clear about their responsibilities. The training that staff receive allows them to identify any early signs that indicate they need to intervene and get help for pupils potentially at risk of harm. Staff make referrals in a timely manner, and your work with other agencies ensures that you offer high-quality care and support for all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable.

The strong culture of safeguarding is enhanced further because of robust systems in place. For example, home visits for all pupils before they begin their time at the school enable you and other staff to have an extensive knowledge and understanding of each pupil, their needs and their families. Governors have a very good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They have all accessed relevant training to extend their knowledge further so that they can support the school and its work to be inclusive and keep children safe and free from risk or harm.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They speak confidently about how to stay safe when using mobile phones or social media, when crossing the road and when they are outside of school playing with friends. Pupils are very confident that bullying is extremely rare. They are also unanimously confident that staff at the school are approachable and will help them should they have any worries or concerns. Parent responses support these views also. Parents are unanimous in their support for the school and its work to keep their children safe. One parent stated proudly, 'My child is happy, enjoys school and Mrs Marshall and her team are excellent.'

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the previous inspection, you have secured improvements in the quality of teaching because of decisive actions you have taken. For example, you have moved staff into different phases and year groups based on their strengths. High-quality support and professional development for staff have ensured that this change has been successful in improving pupils' experiences and outcomes. This is particularly the case in Year 1 where, historically, there has been staffing instability.
- Current Year 1 pupils are benefiting from very strong teaching, and because of this are achieving much stronger outcomes. For example, pupils make strong and sustained progress in their English work because planning is well thought-out and sequenced so that pupils can achieve well. School assessment information indicates that the proportion of pupils on track to achieve the required standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 will continue to be above the national average.
- Another area of my focus was to test out how teachers are challenging pupils in their learning so that more have opportunities to work at greater depth. In the past, not enough pupils have achieved at greater depth. You and other leaders have recognised this, and as a result have provided professional development opportunities for teachers. This has led to 'deeper-understanding' tasks being planned, so that more pupils are now being challenged in their learning. Such tasks were sometimes evident in observations during the inspection and from work scrutinised in pupils' books. It must be noted that expectations of pupils and what they can achieve are consistently high by all staff. Nonetheless, you agree that challenge is not consistently sufficient yet.
- An area that I also focused on was around what you and other leaders are doing to improve and sustain outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by the end of key

stages 1 and 2. This is because disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been variable in recent years. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is carefully tracked by a senior leader. This ensures that any underachievement is swiftly acted upon. For example, bespoke intervention programmes focusing on developing pupils' reading skills are deployed. The strategy in place is comprehensive, and leaders use this to measure the impact of their work. Regular discussions about disadvantaged pupils, particularly using their work to support discussions, are raising awareness and the profile of these pupils. As a result of concerted actions, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are improving, although leaders acknowledge that they are not as rapid as they would like.

- I also took time to look at provision in the early years. Leadership of the early years is exceptionally strong and staff know the children well. Regular monitoring and evaluation of actions and their impact inform the school self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. This strong leadership is supported by a standard of teaching that is high quality within the early years. Sessions are well planned and delivered, and all adults have high expectations of what children can achieve. For example, children in Reception were skilfully questioned by their teacher about the use of punctuation in a sentence. This developed their speech and communication skills but also extended their literacy skills too. The number of children achieving a good level of development over the past two years has been above average. Current school assessment information shows that standards in the early years are continuing to rise so that they are higher than those achieved last year.
- Finally, I looked at how leaders are promoting pupils' welfare, particularly linked to reducing persistent absenteeism of some pupils. Pupils' personal development and welfare are excellent. Pupils are well cared for and receive a wide curriculum that contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Marsden Primary School is welcoming of all, and difference is celebrated. Staff at the school are exceptionally caring. Your family liaison officer is an asset so that pupils are offered timely and effective support and guidance when they are needed.
- Pupils' attendance is high. This is underpinned by the fact that pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils are punctual and in every classroom are prepared and ready to learn. Persistent absence has reduced dramatically and it is now well below the national average. Close monitoring of pupils ensures that any whose attendance falls below the school's threshold are captured early, before it becomes an issue or has a negative impact on their learning or progress.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning activities provide sufficient challenge for all pupils, so that more pupils reach the highest standards they are capable of
- outcomes for disadvantaged pupils continue to improve by the end of key stages 1 and 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and other leaders, including governors, to evaluate the strengths and areas for development across the school. We also discussed the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Together with you and your deputy headteacher, I visited all classes in each phase of the school, particularly Year 1 to evaluate the improvements asserted since the previous inspection. I discussed with you current pupils' assessment information and I reviewed a wide range of work in pupils' books, particularly concentrating on disadvantaged pupils and pupils' achievements in writing. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning and experiences of school. I listened to a group of pupils read. I read and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation document, the school's development plan and the pupil premium strategy plan. I also scrutinised attendance information and documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

I took into account the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, the 44 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and the 65 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 41 free-text responses from parents.