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Mrs Helen Louise Templeton  
Executive Headteacher  
New Brancepeth Primary School  
New Brancepeth  
Durham  
DH7 7EU

Dear Mrs Templeton

### **Short inspection of New Brancepeth Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 March 2015.

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 executive headteacher in September 2017, you have promptly identified the areas of the school that needed to be improved. Along with your deputy headteacher and with support from governors, you have swiftly acted to improve the quality of teaching and leadership skills. While your actions are appropriately targeted, and showing some early signs of improvement, much of this work needs to be embedded. During this academic year, there have been substantial changes to leadership roles, the membership and organisation of the governing body and mobility of pupils joining your school. Leaders have managed these changes effectively overall.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, identified as a strength at the previous inspection, has been maintained. You and your staff have created a caring, friendly and nurturing environment. Your pupils told me that they enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects and that they appreciate clubs which take place before and after school. Responsible roles for pupils in school, such as house captains and being a member of the school council, help to develop pupils into responsible citizens. Pupils understand, and adhere to, the rewards and sanctions approaches, such as your traffic light system. They really appreciate the ways good behaviour, including regular attendance, is recognised. During the inspection, relationships between pupils and staff were very positive throughout.

The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have only been partially addressed. The initial area for improvement, to improve pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, needs further work. As a result, by the end of Year 6 pupils' progress in reading has been significantly below the national average for the two years prior to your appointment. You and your English subject leader have taken a range of actions to address this. However, your school tracking shows that pupils' progress in reading is not strong in many year groups. While we focused on reading during this one-day inspection, your pupil progress information also identifies some concerns about pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress this year shows some early signs of improvement, although this is not consistent across the school.

The second area for improvement was to increase the effectiveness of leaders. Since that last inspection, leadership roles have changed significantly. There is a new deputy headteacher, a different special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and a new subject leader for English. All of these leaders are receiving relevant training from the local authority and from leaders in the other school where you are executive headteacher. However, you recognise that these leaders are new to their roles and there is much to do to improve pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, these leaders will need further support and development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding culture at your school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out appropriate checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You and your staff work effectively with parents and other agencies. You demonstrate a very determined approach to ensure that appropriate pupils' safeguarding and welfare requirements are met when working with other agencies. The recently introduced online system for recording pupils' safeguarding, behaviour, and welfare information has improved your arrangements for collecting and analysing this information.

Your pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take and know staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils believe that behaviour is good and that incidents of bullying are rare. Your detailed records confirm this and demonstrate that staff follow up the limited number of bullying incidents promptly. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was good in lessons and at other times throughout the school day. Parents, carers and staff agree that the school is a safe and caring place to be.

## Inspection findings

- You have accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement and are taking action to address these. The introduction of improved approaches to regularly assessing pupils' progress and detailed records are providing you and your staff with an accurate view of pupils' attainment, progress and gaps in learning. Training and increased expectations have given staff greater ownership of their pupil progress information. Regular pupil progress meetings are now holding teachers accountable for pupils' progress and identifying where pupils need additional support to catch up.
- Leaders and staff have introduced a range of changes to improve the quality of teaching of phonics and reading. You have revised your approach to phonics teaching and have provided training to develop a consistent approach. Regular phonics sessions, which begin in early years, ensure a structured approach to improving pupils' phonics skills. Opportunities for teaching reading have increased and you have purchased new reading stock to improve the quality of texts available for pupils. The profile of reading has improved with greater access to quality books in classroom reading areas. Our review of pupils' English books and our visits into lessons showed that there was evidence of developing practice in the teaching of phonics and reading. However, sometimes teachers do not make effective use of the time available and the work is not well matched to pupils' abilities, including the most able pupils. Most lessons have a high proportion of teaching assistants. While they have a positive effect on pupils' behaviour, their effect upon learning is more variable. Your records also show that there is more to be done to improve pupils' outcomes in phonics and reading.
- The leader for English is new to this role. Working alongside you, she has accurately identified the key priorities for development in her area of responsibility. She is taking action to drive improvement, particularly in reading, and checking alongside other leaders for improvement. This leader is receiving relevant training from the local authority and a leader from the other school where you are executive headteacher. You have in place plans for this support and training to continue.
- The mathematics subject leader has reviewed the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in mathematics. She has taken some actions to improve the planning and resources for mathematics teaching. There has been a particular focus on developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. In 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 was similar to that found nationally. However, your own records show that the progress of your current pupils in mathematics is not strong.
- Identification of pupils' special educational needs has improved. This is helping to secure the appropriate support for these pupils. As a result, staff support the learning, behaviour and emotional needs of these pupils effectively. You know that there is further work to do to ensure that the SENCo continues to ensure that provision for all pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities develops further.

- Children make good progress in early years. Staff ensure that children starting early years quickly settle into the routines. Parents' responses to the Parent View questionnaire were positive about the early years provision. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average. Your current assessments indicate that children continue to make good progress and your results will be similar to national averages this year. Consequently, most pupils are well prepared for Year 1.
- There have been several changes to the organisation and membership of the governing body. Governors are supportive of the school and keen to ensure that a good quality of education is provided in a caring environment. They have recently audited their skills and expertise and seek to strengthen the governing body where necessary. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body have recently attended training to develop their governance skills. Regular meetings with the executive headteacher and visits by governors into school are starting to improve their understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, governors do not hold leaders sharply accountable for improvements. For example, the scrutiny of the effect of additional pupil premium spending is not rigorous. Governors do not check carefully with leaders if this funding has the intended effect on improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and attendance.
- Overall pupils' attendance compares well with national averages. You take action where pupils' absence is high. This is generally having a positive effect on improving individual pupils' attendance. However, your analysis shows that the vast majority of pupils with poor attendance are disadvantaged pupils. It is important that leaders, including governors, check the effect of actions identified in your pupil premium strategy to address this, regularly.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the developing practice in the quality of teaching of phonics and reading is embedded, and that this provides consistently strong teaching which enables pupils to make good progress across all year groups
- teachers make effective use of resources, plan work which is well matched to pupils' needs and deploy teaching assistants effectively
- subject leaders for English and mathematics and the SENCo continue to receive support and training so they develop further the skills required to drive improvements and to check the effectiveness of their actions in their areas of responsibility
- governors receive further development to ensure that they provide appropriate challenge to leaders and to hold them more rigorously to account for school improvement
- pupil premium funding is spent to good effect, by checking more regularly for improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress and attendance.

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

Michael Reeves  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and leaders for English and mathematics. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. My discussions with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with additional information. I took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 21 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and the 11 responses to the staff survey. Along with you, I visited seven classes to observe teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read both within lessons and individually. I looked at pupils' English work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying.