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Mrs Karen Ratcliffe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ratcliffe

Short inspection of Harton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2018 with Deborah Ashcroft, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2013.

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 appointment as headteacher, you have made sure that the quality of education on offer at school has continued to improve. You bring a keen eye for detail to leadership. Your evaluation of the school and associated development plans are precise, thoughtful and ambitious. You have high aspirations for the pupils in your care, and you always look for ways to make your school even better. You are highly tenacious in this respect. Other school leaders, together with members of the governing body and teaching staff, have full confidence in you. Staff morale is high. One member of staff commented, 'I know that everything we are asked to do is for the good and benefit of our pupils, who deserve the best.' You lead by example, and your staff are pleased to follow.

Teaching at your school is characterised by structured planning, and strong subject knowledge on the part of the teachers. Pupils are very keen to learn, and they soak up information willingly. They are mature, and have excellent attitudes to their learning. Where teaching is most effective, members of staff 'read' the class well and skilfully check on pupils' understanding as lessons progress. You use exciting contexts in order to bring learning to life. Pupils were desperate to tell me about the persuasive writing task they were given recently. Here, you had threatened to open the school for three days in the summer holidays in order to compensate for lost learning time from when the school was closed due to heavy snow. Pupils were

certainly jolted into action for that task, and, unsurprisingly, they used persuasive writing techniques well.

A pupil at your school typically feels happy, and engages well with the wide variety of subjects, tasks and after-school activities on offer. They feel safe, cared for, and enjoy their time in class. You place a strong focus on listening to the perspectives of pupils. The school council is very active. They are environmentally conscious, and together teachers and pupils have ensured that there is due attention given to environmental issues across the curriculum. The group of 'eco-warriors' play their part too. Pupils also have a sense of social justice. For example, 'canny Fridays', where pupils bring in cans of provisions for food banks, have been well supported. Parents have noticed that you place pupils at the centre of everything the school does. One parent's comment, typifying that of many, was 'My son loves school and has learned so much over the years. Staff are fantastic and it's a lovely environment to grow in.'

You and your team have been addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The systems that you have put in place to check the quality of teaching, together with specialised professional development opportunities, ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. The standards that pupils reach in reading and writing continue to be strong.

You are by no means complacent and recognise that there is work still to do. You understand that, although much teaching is very effective, that there are still some inconsistencies across the school, and you want all of your pupils to experience consistently outstanding teaching. You are also aware that too few pupils attain higher standards in external tests, and you want to make sure that more and more pupils leave Year 6 ready to 'fly' at secondary school. You are supported by an increasingly strong governing body, chaired by an experienced and able colleague. You receive highly effective support from the local authority.

Safeguarding is effective.

Policies and procedures used to keep pupils safe are effective and fit for purpose. Staff training is up to date. There is tenacity around ensuring that more-vulnerable pupils are supported; you and other leaders are proactive in working with outside agencies in order to keep more-vulnerable pupils secure. However, at your school, safeguarding is much more than this. A culture of safeguarding and care is evident right through school, and everyone plays their part.

Pupils are courteous and polite to adults, and caring towards one another. The school council are active in supporting the 'buddy bus stop', for example, where pupils can wait if they are lonely, and members of the council make sure they have someone to play with. Younger pupils focus on being a good friend, and the 'kindness tree' reminds them of tolerance, respect and the importance of making good choices. The golden rules, written and agreed by the whole school, include the desire to treat others 'as we would like to be treated'.

Parents are made aware of the part they can play in keeping their children safe. For example, teachers ran a mental health information evening to help parents support their children if they come home from school feeling stressed or worried.

You place a high priority on promoting healthy lifestyles. An inspector spotted pupils doing morning exercise to popular '90s tunes, and pupils talked animatedly to inspectors about the number of sports clubs on offer, including football, dodgeball, and volleyball.

You do not leave anything to chance. You mirror the way you track the academic progress that pupils are making with a 'pupils causing concern' tracker. Here, you make sure that any social or emotional issues a pupil may have are identified and dealt with. The system also notes when pupils are absent from school too often. You use rewards, as well as 'Toffee Bear', to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. Policies and procedures, together with specific curriculum activities, come together to build this safeguarding culture.

Inspection findings

- The quality of mathematics teaching is improving. The deputy headteacher noted that there were some weaknesses in mathematics lesson planning, and organised a sensible and effective programme of professional development for teachers and other staff at school. This has had a majorly positive impact on the progress that pupils are making in this subject. Pupils now think about why calculations work, rather than simply doing them repetitively. They have many more opportunities to solve mathematical problems, and are developing their understanding of mathematical concepts strongly. Teachers told inspectors that they appreciated this training, and inspectors saw first-hand evidence in exercise books of a leap in standards for some pupils. This was particularly the case for Year 1 pupils.
- The deputy headteacher shares your eye for detail. An example of this is in the teaching of fractions. Having noticed that it was in this specific area of mathematics that pupils were struggling, he, again, used teacher training sessions to remedy this. His desire to get teaching right 'first time' is ensuring that time in class is spent more effectively. You and he are both aware that not all teaching at school is as strong as it could be. You are working at a pace to ensure that all pupils in school receive the very best teaching.
- One of my areas of focus was how well the school supports most-able pupils. Inspection evidence confirms that these pupils are well served at school. Teachers question these pupils well, and ensure that subject content in lessons stretches their knowledge and skills. Children in early years are being supported effectively, and some of the most able children are developing their reading and writing skills quickly. A very structured approach in Years 5 and 6 is making sure that all groups of pupils make strong progress in these year groups. You are aware that a greater proportion of middle-attaining pupils could be pushed to reach the higher standards in national tests.
- I also considered the quality of your curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils receive a broad and balanced diet of subjects, and your

tracking of pupils' progress in these subjects is improving. You make sure that wider aspects of education are threaded through school life. Your work in achieving the International Schools Award, and your intentional planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exemplify this.

- You, and other leaders, work well with parents. Together with your family support worker, you ensure that parents who need additional support receive it. You are creative about the ways in which you encourage parents to come to school and learn about the curriculum on offer. Activities such as the 'penguin party', where you focused on writing fiction and non-fiction texts, and the 'arty party' which was linked to environmentalism and geography, are increasingly well attended. Many parents have a positive opinion of the school.
- Although not a focus for this inspection, I note the high standards that pupils who start school with low levels of ability reach by the end of Year 6. This is due to the consistently positive and nurturing environment at school. While with you, these pupils develop in confidence and maturity, and their abilities are honed successfully. In 2017, the standards that this group of pupils reached at key stage 2 in writing and mathematics were strikingly high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are eradicated, so that it is consistently strong
- a greater proportion of pupils reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of this inspection, I looked at the rates of progress that pupils are making, and the standards that they are reaching, in mathematics. I wanted to know what actions leaders are taking to make sure that mathematics is taught well. I also explored the extent to which the most able pupils are being pushed in lessons. I considered how well leaders are tracking the progress that pupils are making in subjects other than English and mathematics. In addition, I wanted to know how

strong the relationship between parents and the school is. I also looked at how adults at school teach pupils to keep themselves safe, and to what extent there is a culture of safeguarding at school.

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, and a group of middle leaders. I met with a representative from the local authority and spoke with two members of the governing body on the telephone, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector spoke to parents at the beginning of the day, and we spoke with groups of pupils across the course of the inspection. We observed teaching and learning with members of the senior team, and reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and from a variety of subjects. An inspector listened to some pupils read. You presented the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document and information detailing pupils' progress and attainment. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website. I also considered the 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.