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Mrs Julia Wallace  
Headteacher  
Dunham-on-Trent CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Wallace

### **Short inspection of Dunham-on-Trent CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 April 2014.

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.**

Dunham-on-Trent CofE Primary School is a small, happy school. A warm atmosphere welcomes parents, visitors and children who are new to the school. This is fostered by a careful attention to relationships and the strong values which underpin the work of the school. Opportunities are sought for pupils to develop as people as well as academically. For example, I met pupil sports leaders who were independently discussing and planning games for the day ahead. Without prompting, they reminded me that their games had to be available for everyone of all ages. The conduct of all pupils during this inspection was good.

You took up post as headteacher almost exactly two years ago. You quickly identified where urgent changes were needed. Previous school leaders and governors had not fully prepared for the introduction of the new national curriculum or for the changes in the way of measuring pupils' progress and so this was an early priority for you. You provided strong leadership through an effective review of the curriculum and the introduction of an appropriate assessment system for reading, writing and mathematics. Staff are increasingly energised. Subject leaders have introduced new approaches to make necessary improvements in spelling, reading and mathematics. These are beginning to bear fruit. Your emphasis on research and learning for teachers is building a strong base. Some leaders now speak with

authority and knowledge about their subjects. They appreciate the links you are building with other schools and organisations. They are not yet playing a full part in challenging the quality of teaching in their area throughout the school. Teachers say that they feel well supported and able to try new ideas in their teaching. There is a growing ambition for what the pupils can achieve, including at the highest standards. For example, 'push it' questions enable pupils to grapple with more challenging learning.

You have worked with governors to ensure that they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school as well as you do. Their frequent visits to the school ensure that they have an accurate sense of the school overall. Governors engage in training and are becoming knowledgeable about priorities for next steps. They are not currently providing you with the support and challenge you need. However, governors share your ambition for pupils' achievement and are determined to provide the support you need to succeed in the future.

At the time of the last inspection in 2014, spelling was identified as an important area for improvement. At the end of summer 2017, published outcomes showed that spelling had not been tackled effectively. Year 6 had spelling scores which were below national averages from every starting point. Year 1 and 2 phonics scores were also below the national averages. Previous leaders and governors had not addressed this area for improvement effectively. However, since your appointment you have overseen the introduction of new approaches to teaching spelling which observations in school confirmed are having a positive effect. You anticipate that these improvements will show in published data this year.

By the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils made progress which was in line with national averages, suggesting that there has been some effective teaching for the older pupils. During this inspection, lessons were visited in every key stage. In one lesson where older pupils were grappling with a complex mathematical problem, the teacher's announcement of playtime caused groans of sadness rather than the usual cries of joy. This is a good sign for the future.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have a detailed knowledge of your pupils. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have ensured that staff are trained and know what to do if they have a concern. You provide regular safeguarding updates in staff briefings. Recruitment procedures are secure. Safeguarding policy and practice take account of the most recent legislation. Governors had not ensured that the most recent child protection policy had been updated on the school website but you had corrected this before the end of the inspection. You ensure that safeguarding records are appropriately maintained, and you work well with other agencies when necessary.

Pupils' good conduct and care for each other plays a significant part in their feelings of safety when in school. You foster their positive relationships with each other. One example of this, seen in action during this inspection, was the use of a drama specialist to help a group of pupils explore empathy. Most parents who responded to

Parent View said that their child felt safe in school. Pupils gave similar views in their own survey. Your emphasis on safety extends to your regular items in the school newsletter. You are aware that e-safety is a particular concern for all pupils and you make sure that parents are well informed so that they can protect their children at home. In summary, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

## **Inspection findings**

- There has been a change in the way pupils are expected to learn how to spell and this is leading to rapid improvement in internal test results. In their books, older pupils are now writing at greater length and their spelling is becoming much more accurate. Teachers are correcting misspellings appropriately. For the younger children, the teaching of phonics is improving and there is evidence in school that children are becoming more secure with their phonic knowledge. Leaders expect these improvements to begin to show in external test results this summer. The evidence seen during this inspection suggests that, since your appointment, you have tackled this area for improvement well.
- Standards had declined in the Reception Year during a period of staffing instability. Too few children had been starting Year 1 with a good level of development. By the end of Year 2 in 2017, many of these pupils did not reach national standards because their progress in key stage 1 had been insufficient for them to catch up. Teaching has now stabilised.
- You identified quickly that assessment had been inaccurate over this time and that the quality of teaching had been inconsistent. You challenged and supported teachers personally and provided access to external training and expertise. Teachers and subject leaders have risen to the challenge. There have been improvements in practice such as in the involvement of parents to support reading. New approaches to teaching mathematics have been introduced and are now being refined. Teachers' assessments are now moderated with other schools to ensure that they are accurate. During this inspection, I looked at the books of pupils in Year 2 now and compared them with some of the Year 2 books from a year ago. There is no doubt that standards are better now. Improvement can also be seen in the regular tracking of pupils' progress information. A good start has been made but some pupils in key stage 1 and Year 3 are still behind where they should be.
- Your early work on assessment included emphasis on accuracy and complete agreement among staff about what good standards look like in pupils' work. This began, rightly, in reading, writing and mathematics but has now extended to the wider range of subjects taught. Teachers are now using clear descriptions of what pupils should be able to do at different ages. This is starting to build much greater consistency across the school.
- You carry out regular monitoring of teaching throughout the school and this is providing useful information. You make sure that teachers are informed about what is going well and where adjustments are needed. They are using this information to improve practice quickly. Governors are aware that there is more to do, but they are heartened by the improvements evident in the reports they

receive from you and from subject leaders. Subject leaders are becoming increasingly skilled at using research to inform practice. They are using information about pupils' progress well. However, they are reliant on you to provide information about the quality of teaching in their subject area as they have not been trained to carry out monitoring and evaluation themselves.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue work to ensure that assessment is accurate in all subjects
- pupils' progress accelerates, particularly in key stage 1 and current Year 3, as teachers use this accurate assessment in their planning
- leaders' capacity to drive these improvements is increased by developing the skills of other senior and subject leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching
- governors provide effective and timely challenge and support for school leaders, including ensuring that information published on the school website is accurate and legally compliant.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I considered evidence from a range of sources, including the previous inspection report and information about the school's performance in 2015, 2016 and 2017. I looked at the school's website and read key policies. I considered 25 responses on Parent View and 27 to the school's own survey in March 2018. I also considered responses from pupils and staff to Ofsted surveys. Meetings were held with you, school leaders and governors to discuss progress since the last inspection. I considered a range of monitoring information, the single central record of the checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the child protection policy and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare. I looked at training certificates. I talked with staff to make sure they knew what to do if they were concerned about a child. We jointly made visits to lessons, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils. I observed and talked to pupils at breaktime and in lessons.