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Mr Stephen Cornforth
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Dear Mr Cornforth

Short inspection of Willington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils are happy to attend Willington Primary School. They told me that they feel safe and secure and love learning, especially in mathematics. Parents and carers are appreciative of your successful efforts to create a caring school community. One expressed the opinions of many, when writing, 'Willington is a very inclusive school in which the focus is very much on the well-being of the children as well as on academic results.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' mathematics and writing. You have successfully addressed these areas for development through the introduction of daily arithmetic lessons and the implementation of a whole-school writing project. Currently, pupils in all key stages are making good progress in both mathematics and writing. However, you have identified that the accuracy of pupils' spelling remains an issue to be addressed.

Leadership is now shared more widely among the teaching staff. All teachers lead an area of the curriculum. They check pupils' progress, implement plans for improvement and report to governors. Pupils' progress is measured against challenging targets. This too was an area for development at the time of the last inspection.

The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the 2016 and 2017 Year 1 phonics screening checks was in line with the national average. You, quite rightly, recognise the need for all pupils to achieve this standard in Year 1, so that they are well prepared for the demands of reading and the curriculum in Year 2. Phonics and reading are high on the school's priorities for improvement.

Governance is effective. Your governors know the school's strengths and areas for further development well. They understand pupils' assessment information and can explain the positive impact of the government's additional funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Your governors are delighted that assertive action taken to improve pupils' behaviour has led to a significant reduction in the number of pupils excluded from school for a fixed term. Governors recognise that they need to receive more information from you about the number of low-level behavioural incidents that occur in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This was confirmed during a recent safeguarding health check that was carried out by the local authority. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding evaluates the school's record of safer recruitment checks on a regular basis. The school's site is secure and maintained well.

You, as designated safeguarding lead, together with the school's parent support adviser, ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families access appropriate help and support in a timely manner. The actions to be undertaken to improve pupils' academic progress and emotional well-being, including their resilience, are outlined clearly in their individual support plans.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average over time. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is well below average. There have been no fixed-term exclusions since the beginning of the current academic year. Pupils know which repeated actions constitute bullying and said that there is no bullying at your school. They told me that their behaviour is not as good during lunchtimes as it is during the rest of the school day. The frequency and nature of these lunchtime, low-level behavioural incidents are not routinely reported to governors. This is an area for development.

Pupils have been taught about the dangers inherent in using the internet. They know not to give out their personal details when working online.

Inspection findings

- The subject leader for mathematics has ensured that teaching, learning and assessment practices are consistent across the school. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are brimming with mathematical confidence. They know their number facts and multiplication

tables thoroughly. They add, subtract, multiply and divide with ease. As a result, they solve complex mathematical problems with aplomb. As one pupil said, 'I love maths!'

- The school's inclusion in a writing project with seven other primary schools is paying dividends. Again, teachers' practice is becoming more consistent across key stages. Pupils organise their writing well, using a wide range of vocabulary and increasingly complex punctuation. The standard of their handwriting is much improved since the beginning of the academic year. However, spelling, especially in key stage 2, is an area that requires development.
- Although the proportion of pupils who reach the standard in the Year 1 screening check on phonics is in line with the national average, there are still five or six pupils each year who do not. The subject leader for English has recently overhauled the provision for phonics in early years and in key stage 1. For example, the current cohort of Year 1 pupils are having an additional phonics session every day to ensure that any identified weaknesses are addressed. While acknowledging that the new provision should have been reviewed earlier, leaders have identified that current pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are progressing through the phonics phases and learning new sounds more rapidly now.
- You and your leaders, quite correctly, have identified improving pupils' achievement in reading as a whole-school improvement objective. Leaders now have a more accurate understanding of pupils' progress because of improvements made to the way in which pupils' skills in reading are assessed. Previously, pupils learned to read words and then completed reading comprehension exercises. Now, pupils are reading many different types of texts, including core texts in each year group, with their teachers. Early indications are that although pupils are making better progress, it is not the rapid progress of which they are capable, especially for the most able. Interestingly, the pupils identified that teaching, learning and assessment are not as good in reading as they are in English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions taken recently to improve the provision for phonics in early years and key stage 1, and reading across the school, are evaluated incisively
- assertive action is taken to improve the standard of pupils' spelling in all key stages
- low-level behaviour incidents are recorded so that trends can be identified and addressed.

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

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you and the leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics and early years. In addition, I held a meeting with four governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. I also talked to the school's education development partner by telephone. I checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the improvement plan for English. In addition, I examined information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement. I looked at the school's most recent survey of parents' views and considered 11 free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Alongside you and your deputy headteacher, I visited classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I talked formally to a group of pupils from Years 2, 3 and 5, and talked more informally to pupils in lessons about their learning. I read with children from Reception and pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3. I took account of 63 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.