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Mrs Joanne Sones
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sones

Short inspection of Ludworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018 with Steven Shaw, HMI, 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have created a happy school where pupils are nurtured and encouraged to achieve well. Pupils are supported to develop very positive attitudes to learning. By the time they reach key stage 2, pupils work very hard in lessons, respond quickly to advice from adults and are keen to succeed. Parents, pupils and staff share the view that pupils are well looked after and are safe in school.

You have managed effectively a number of staffing challenges since the previous inspection. Throughout this period, you have remained focused on steadily improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. You and the leadership team support staff to constantly reflect on, and refine, the quality of teaching. As a result of your work, the attainment of pupils in key stage 1 has improved so that a broadly average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make strong progress across key stage 2 and, in 2017, a higher-than-average proportion of pupils left the school at the end of Year 6 well prepared for their secondary education.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' skills in reading, particularly at key stage 1, and their skills in writing at key stage 2. All pupils now have regular opportunities to write at length and for different purposes. Most pupils have a neat, well-developed handwriting script. Pupils' workbooks show that standards in writing, grammar and punctuation have improved. Pupils have access to a wider range of reading materials and speak enthusiastically about the importance of reading. The teaching of reading in key stage 2 is enabling pupils to make particularly strong

progress. While the standards reached by pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check are broadly in line with the national average, you accept that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils quickly develop the skills that they need to read with fluency.

You recognise the needs of the pupils in your care and have taken steps to 'poverty proof' the school to reduce the likelihood that pupils are disadvantaged by their personal circumstances. Leaders have improved the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children in the early years so that a broadly average proportion reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year in 2017. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress across key stage 2. You have correctly identified that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 is less consistent and you recognise that this is an area for further development.

You and the governing body are ambitious for the school. You share honest and accurate information with governors and they seek external confirmation of the school's effectiveness through the local authority and other partners. Governors also keep abreast of the views of pupils through feedback from the pupil 'learning detectives'. Consequently, governors know what is working well and what needs to improve. This has enabled them to set appropriate priorities for the school's development. However, leaders' plans for improvement do not include measurable targets to improve the school's performance. This limits the ability of leaders, including governors, to precisely evaluate the impact of their actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective and fit for purpose. Staff have received the training that they need so that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe. The correct checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children. Detailed records are maintained of your work in relation to pupils who are at risk of significant harm. You show tenacity in following up issues with other agencies when you are not satisfied with the level of support provided to a pupil or their family. Regular discussions about safeguarding in staff meetings, including reflection on the learning from case reviews, ensure that pupils' safety is high on everyone's agenda.

You have worked successfully to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional skills. Pupils speak proudly of the actions that they have taken to develop their resilience, and they know how important it is to stick at things, even when they may be tricky. Pupils demonstrate a mature attitude to resolving conflict. They, and you, acknowledge that, while a few pupils occasionally behave in an inappropriate way in the playground, these incidents are reducing. Pupils indicate their confidence in staff to address issues when they arise. Your detailed records of behaviour incidents support this view.

Absence and persistent absence are too high and have been so over time. Despite your actions, there is limited evidence to show any significant improvement in pupils' attendance. You have recently changed your approach to tracking and managing attendance, but it is too soon to see any sustained impact on overall absence figures. This aspect of the school's work needs to be addressed urgently to ensure that no pupil

is disadvantaged by low attendance.

Inspection findings

- You have established a culture in the school where staff are keen to explore good practice elsewhere. You embrace external support to help you to improve key aspects of the school's performance. This approach has been instrumental in enabling you to develop pupils' reading skills. A new curriculum for reading is complemented by more frequent assessments of pupils' reading skills. Staff use this information to ensure that pupils are given reading material which challenges them at the right level for their reading ability. Because of your work, standards of attainment in reading have risen throughout the school and are particularly strong across key stage 2.
- The standards reached by pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check are broadly in line with the national average. However, at times, the teaching of phonics does not secure the best possible progress for pupils. Phonics teaching does not support pupils well enough to rapidly recall letters and the sounds that they make. This limits some pupils' ability to read with fluency at the expected standard for their age.
- Work in books shows that pupils write frequently, at length, in a range of subjects and for different purposes. Teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the importance of selecting the right vocabulary, punctuation and grammatical features to create a particular effect. This was exemplified during the inspection when, during a lesson in lower key stage 2, the teacher's expert questioning supported pupils to reflect on, and improve, the style of their writing for a non-chronological report. Pupils enjoy writing. They told me that teachers make writing fun and excitedly recalled an experience when they wore 'secret agent' badges and wrote, in role, to MI5.
- You correctly identified that not enough pupils were reaching the highest standards of attainment in writing and you set this as a priority. Teachers now have higher expectations of the work that the most able pupils will produce. Pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that the most able pupils are currently making strong progress and that the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard in writing is rising.
- Since the previous inspection, you have reviewed the curriculum and introduced a new approach to teaching spelling. More recently, you have, as a result of your monitoring, sharpened your strategy so that teachers are quicker to identify and address pupils' errors and misconceptions in relation to spelling. Pupils' books show that pupils are increasingly spelling with accuracy.
- The development of mathematics teaching has ensured that pupils now have more opportunities to solve complex problems and to explore mathematical concepts. Pupils are becoming more confident to explain their mathematical reasoning. Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics continues to improve as a result of your work.
- The spending of pupil premium funding has been appropriately focused to secure improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in the early years and key stage 2. However, your own assessment information shows that, during 2016/17, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 did not make rapid enough progress to help them to catch up to the expected standard for their age. While there has been some

improvement in the rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils during the current academic year, there is more to do to ensure that progress is consistently strong.

- The plans in place to improve the school's performance are detailed and include a range of relevant actions to address the identified priorities. However, the success criteria within the plans are in the form of a list of tasks to be completed, rather than defining the impact that leaders expect to see on the quality of provision or outcomes for pupils. Because of this, leaders and governors find it difficult to be precise about those actions which have made the biggest difference and, conversely, the actions which have led to limited gains.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1 is refined so that pupils more rapidly develop the skills that they need to read with fluency
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 accelerates so that a higher proportion catch up to, and exceed, the standards expected for their age
- rates of pupils' absence and persistent absence reduce to at least in line with the national average
- school improvement planning is sharpened so that leaders, including governors, can precisely evaluate the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils.

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

Claire Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I held a discussion with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I listened to a group of pupils read. I reviewed examples of pupils' work. You presented information detailing pupils' achievement, your self-evaluation of the school and the school development plan. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils were checked. I reviewed information about the school and its policies, including on the school's website. I considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke

with some parents at the start of the school day. I also reviewed eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 11 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.