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Mr Darren Gamble
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gamble

Short inspection of Acklam Whin Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 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 in September 2015, you have worked well with other leaders and governors to identify accurately the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The leadership team, staff and governors share your ambition to achieve the best academic outcomes for pupils and to provide high-quality personal development and welfare for pupils. Over the last two years, there have been several changes to leadership and staffing roles. These have been managed effectively and the school is in a positive position for its continued development.

Leaders and staff have maintained the strengths in the school's provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, identified at the previous inspection. Positive relationships between staff and pupils, pupils and their peers make this a friendly and caring school. Pupils enjoy the curriculum provided and appreciate the support that staff provide with their learning. They are enthusiastic about the range of healthy activities available, during and after school, and proud of the school's success in a wide range of sports. Pupils were keen to tell me about your forthcoming production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', which is developing their cultural understanding and social skills.

Overall, in 2017, your pupils' attainment at the end of early years and the end of key stage 1 compares very well to the averages found nationally. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading was significantly above the national average and

their progress in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. However, pupils' progress in writing was significantly below the national averages in 2016 and 2017. Improving pupils' progress in writing has, rightly, been a focus for leaders and staff. There is evidence of an improving pattern of pupils' outcomes since 2016. This is continuing for current pupils in the majority of classes in key stage 2. However, you agree that writing remains a focus for the school and you and your staff have increased your efforts this year in order to tackle this area for improvement more rigorously.

You are using a range of approaches to continue to improve the quality of teaching. Training by school leaders and external experts is currently focused on improving the quality of teaching of writing and mathematics problem-solving and reasoning. Supportive guidance documents are helping teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 better understand the requirements of the national curriculum writing expectations. You have recently developed approaches to enable teachers to share their expertise, planning and delivering lessons, with guidance and development from senior leaders. Leaders are checking regularly that these developments are making a difference to pupils' progress. Consequently, this area for improvement in the previous inspection has been largely addressed.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a positive 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. Additional support, such as counselling provision, is available to support pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders seek external guidance, for example from the local authority, to ensure that best practice is followed. They promptly respond to advice and this improves your safeguarding practice, for example in relation to recording actions following behaviour or bullying incidents.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Staff supervise playtimes suitably and there is a wide range of activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils believe that behaviour in lessons and at other times throughout the day is very good. While the vast majority of parents' comments about the school were very positive, a small number of parents raised some concerns about bullying. I found that pupils know the different forms that bullying can take. They believe that incidents of bullying are rare and if they do occur they are confident that staff will help them if they have concerns. Your detailed records show that you take all incidents of poor behaviour and bullying, including homophobic name-calling, seriously. Staff make determined efforts to investigate incidents and provide suitable guidance to pupils.

Inspection findings

- Over the last two years, there have been several changes to leadership roles across the school. Suitable training and support is in place to assist leaders new to roles. This is developing their leadership skills and strengthening leadership capacity.
- The leader for English, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has introduced a range of strategies to improve the quality of teaching of writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. She regularly checks with other leaders for the effect of these actions to identify signs of improvement or where additional support is needed.
- Improving pupils' outcomes in writing has been a focus for school improvement since 2016. This year has seen a 'step change' in your drive to improve this area. Teachers have received training from school leaders and external consultants. A governor with a high level of expertise in this area has supported with auditing the school's work. A wide range of strategies have been implemented to improve the quality of teaching and assessment of writing. Our review of pupils' books, current pupils' progress information and visits to classrooms to see these new approaches in practice demonstrated the growing positive effects of this work. There are improvements in the quality of pupils' work and increased opportunities to write across a range of genres. However, some of the new approaches are not consistently applied and your records show that improvements in pupils' progress in writing remain variable across key stage 2. You and your leaders recognise that there is more to do to embed these improvements.
- The profile of writing has been improved. Around the school there are interesting displays of pupils' writing across a range of subjects. Pupils love the opportunity to have their work published online and this recent development enhances their sense of what it means to be an author.
- The progress in mathematics and writing of the most able pupils in key stage 2 has not been strong enough for the past two years. You have taken action to improve assessment of pupils' current attainment and to raise teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve. The strategies introduced for improving writing and mathematics overall are also relevant for improving progress for these pupils. Review of pupils' work showed that there is growing evidence of work which is providing challenge to enable pupils to work at the higher standard in these subjects. However, on some occasions, most-able pupils are spending too long working through activities where they have already shown a secure understanding and they could be moved to more challenging work to deepen their learning.
- The assistant headteacher, who provides leadership for mathematics, has identified the need to improve the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics. She has taken appropriate action to improve this aspect and checks for improvement in both the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Aspects of this work are still developing, and leaders recognise that there is more to be done to embed and develop this work further. Clear plans, including projects

working collaboratively with other schools, are in place to address this.

- The appointment of your deputy headteacher has increased overall leadership capacity and provided additional expertise in writing, assessment and mathematics. She has acted as a catalyst to accelerate the improvements in these three areas. Her modelling of effective practice and creation of teachers' guidance documents is helping staff to improve their practice.
- Governors have a good understanding of the community the school serves and the school's priorities. Visits into school, for example to consider the school's safeguarding arrangements, help them to understand how effectively the school is improving in practice. Detailed reporting from leaders, including analysis of current pupils' progress information, ensure that governors are well informed about the school's development. However, governors have not checked with leaders the effect of pupil premium funding rigorously enough. These pupils' attainment is not high enough, particularly in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions for improving pupils' outcomes, in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling are embedded, so that pupils' progress in these subjects continues to improve and the proportions of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards at least match the national averages
- the recently introduced approaches to improve the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics are developed, and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard at least matches the national average
- governors hold leaders rigorously accountable for the effect of pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils' outcomes improve, particularly in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. 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, your deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the leaders for English and safeguarding. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a telephone call with a representative from the local

authority. My discussions with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with additional information. I considered school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 41 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, the 34 responses to the staff survey and the 18 responses to the pupil survey. Along with you, I visited six classes to observe teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read within lessons. I looked at pupils' English and mathematics work to help evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time. I considered information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying.