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8 June 2018

Mrs Wendy Mulligan  
Headteacher  
Niels Junior Infant and Nursery School  
Niels Road  
Slaithwaite  
Huddersfield  
West Yorkshire  
HD7 5HT

Dear Mrs Mulligan

### **Short inspection of Niels Junior Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 June 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 June 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your deputy headteacher has a clear and accurate grasp of what is working well in school as well as what needs to further improve. Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective steps to spot strong practice and share it across the school. As a result, phonics remains a strength of the school, there is increasing challenge for the most able, and the quality and content of written work are improving. However, you recognise that further work is needed to improve pupils' writing across the school.

The deputy headteacher has taken up the role of acting headteacher in your absence. Staff rightly say that the school is in safe hands. He is a respected and visible presence in and around school. He, along with other staff, can be seen in the playground keen to ensure that pupils start the day well. This is helping to improve home/school communication.

Your staff work well together and are a cohesive and proud team. Parents and pupils rightly praise the staff for the care they show pupils and their efforts to develop the whole child.

Recently, subject coordinators have been given time to do the job asked of them. This has helped improve the quality of their work and helped to deal with workload issues. Subject coordinators have an accurate view on what is working well and priorities for further development.

The school motto is 'reach for stars, fly to the moon'. This shows the ambition and expectations staff have of pupils. However, your school improvement plans, including the use of additional funding, are not as helpful as they could be in enabling you to fulfil these ambitions. These plans lack clear and precise impact measures to help leaders judge whether their actions are actually improving outcomes for pupils throughout the year. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to know whether actions are having the impact they hoped they would have.

Local authority officers have acted quickly to support the deputy headteacher in your absence. A local headteacher (who is also a local leader of education) is providing useful advice and support. However, there is not a clear plan in place to support the deputy headteacher, especially with respect to some of the specialist roles you, as headteacher, have. This includes quickly deciding who is best placed and qualified to take responsibility for roles, including the special educational needs coordinator and the designated lead for safeguarding, in your absence.

Governors are a noticeable presence in and around the school. They have worked hard to engage with the wider community. Their highly visible red T-shirts help parents to spot who governors are. This is enabling some parents to share their views of how well their pupils are doing. In the light of budgetary pressures, the parent and staff fundraising association has also raised considerable funds to help and support pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is effective. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff realise that it is their number one duty to make sure pupils are safe. Staff are vigilant and know how to spot and report potential signs of neglect and other worries or concerns. Leaders work hard to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families get the help and support they need.

Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. Pupils I spoke to, alongside the findings of my scrutiny of your records of bullying incidents, confirm this. Pupils know that any concerns they have will be taken seriously by staff and dealt with effectively. Parent and staff surveys also confirm this to be the case.

Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out on all staff before they start work in the school. In the past, the administration of this has been somewhat lax. Due to the excellent work from the designated governor for safeguarding, this administration is now effective.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance remains above the national average. The rise in absence rates in 2017 was largely due to specific reasons within particular year groups. You use some rewards to encourage pupils to attend school on a regular basis and have your 'ten to nine I'm on time' motto to encourage pupils to be punctual to school. Your deputy headteacher recognises that further work is needed to evaluate the impact of this work over time.
- Staff in Nursery and Reception work very well together. They form a close-knit and passionate team focused on making sure children have a positive start to their school life. Staff have worked hard to build on children's interests, especially boys. There are now more opportunities for boys to engage with reading and mark-making both indoors and outside.
- In 2017 there was a proportion of children, especially boys, entering Year 1 having not met the early learning goals. There are signs that some of these pupils are now catching up, especially in phonics. However, this remains a mixed picture, and a small number of pupils are still struggling with the demands of key stage 1.
- In key stage 1, there are signs that pupils' writing is improving. Leaders have taken effective steps to capture pupils' interests and build up their stamina for writing at greater length. Phonics remains a strength of the school. This is because staff regularly and effectively assess how well pupils are doing. Staff use this information well to regroup pupils to ensure that phonics lessons challenge pupils on a daily basis.
- In key stage 2, writing is improving. Leaders recognise that, following the previous inspection, they did not tackle issues in writing quickly enough. However, over the last two years more rapid improvements have been seen. Current in-school information, coupled with pupils' work in books, shows that writing is improving. There are now more genuine opportunities for writing, and the most able pupils are starting to be challenged more effectively.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a clear and effective plan is put in place to ensure the appropriate distribution of roles and responsibilities while the headteacher is absent
- improvement plans clearly show the intended impact that actions will have on pupils' progress (especially in further improving pupils' progress in writing), punctuality and the use of additional funding
- the improved administration of the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are maintained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with your deputy headteacher, who has been the acting headteacher since March of this year, your senior leaders and a group of subject coordinators. I also met with a group of governors and a local authority officer. I met with a local leader of education who has recently started supporting the deputy headteacher in his role as acting headteacher. Together with your deputy headteacher and other leaders, I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. Consideration was given to the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered four pupil and ten staff responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff questionnaires. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school's own self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a range of documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled some vulnerable children's case files.