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Mr Neil Loftus  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Loftus

### **Short inspection of Newhall Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 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. Newhall Infant and Nursery School is a happy, friendly school. Parents and carers are delighted to bring their children here. Without exception, every parent who spoke to me or who completed Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, would recommend the school to other parents. I was told about your detailed knowledge of each child and the care and interest you show, in some cases long after the child has left your school. Members of staff are equally warm and knowledgeable. The teachers are experienced and, like you, have been committed to the school over many years. Nevertheless, their energy and ambition to improve remain. They work together and with you to ensure that there is a consistency of good practice. Governors complete the team. They are knowledgeable and thoughtful, using their secure knowledge of the school gained from frequent visits, monitoring activities and reports from you and other leaders. To use their own words, they are 'proud to be governors' at Newhall Infant and Nursery School.

Together, you have worked effectively since the last inspection. You were charged with closing the gap in attainment between mathematics and English. This has been done. Standards by the end of Reception have been consistently above national averages for the last three years, despite challenging beginnings for many of the children. In 2017, the school was above average in the percentage of pupils who reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2. However, too few pupils reached greater depth, so this was a focus for the inspection. I also looked at the

achievement of disadvantaged pupils during key stage 1 because they did not do as well as their peers in 2017.

The second area for improvement from the last inspection concerned the use of more precise targets in your planning so that leaders and governors can check on the success of actions to improve throughout the year. Since the last inspection, leaders have been developing the use of pupil progress information to ensure that pupils get extra help in a timely and effective way. Teachers know their pupils well. You and your senior leaders provide challenge to teachers and each other when pupils do not make progress. You have not yet translated that precision into improvement plans, another focus for this inspection.

Pupils' conduct makes an extremely positive contribution to their learning. They are expected to develop independence from an early age, and this bears fruit as they move through the school. They are eager to improve and they work well with each other on the range of activities provided in each lesson. Their 'red books' provide an account of how writing improves over the three or four years in school, from their first marks to well-crafted sentences and paragraphs. Handwriting is consistent, attractive and cursive by the end of Year 2 and the pupils are rightly proud of their work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents all say that their child feels safe at school. The site is secure and well maintained. It has been designed and equipped imaginatively so that pupils can explore social, creative and physical challenges, such as crossing the 'Troll Bridge', under careful supervision. Their excellent conduct plays a strong part in their feelings of safety. Staff are trained well and they know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Recruitment practices are secure and leaders are quick to respond if there are any areas of doubt.

You are the designated safeguarding lead, supported by a small team of other leaders. You keep careful records which are stored securely. Your detailed knowledge of each child provides a depth and breadth to your work to keep children safe. The school works effectively with other agencies, including challenging them when their responses seem to be too slow. This is a school with children at its heart.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we discussed whether current improvement plans include clear criteria to explain what leaders are aiming to achieve. Leaders at all levels are now using pupil progress information much more effectively. For individual pupils, this is leading to timely interventions if progress stalls or if the pupil is ready for greater challenge. Governors receive regular reports about progress and they can talk confidently about the rigorous discussions they have had with school leaders. However, documents such as the school improvement plan and

the pupil premium strategy do not use precise language to explain what success will look like. Therefore, although pupil progress is evident, governors cannot tell if it is happening fast enough relative to an ambitious goal set at the outset. In addition, leaders have not compared the achievement of disadvantaged pupils with other pupils nationally.

- Governors monitor the work of the school with skill and sensitivity. Their own monitoring reports evaluate provision well, but the minutes of meetings do not reflect governors' challenge of school leaders. As a result, there is no record to which governors can refer when they check on subsequent actions. Governors had already decided how to address this issue by the end of the inspection.
- In 2017, although a high proportion of Year 2 pupils overall reached expected standards, not enough reached greater depth in their work. Leaders and governors had noticed this and swiftly responded with a focus on increasing the challenge for the most able pupils this year. Information about current pupils in Year 2 indicates that there are likely to be substantial gains in the proportion reaching greater depth in 2018. Leaders have endeavoured to ensure that their judgements about standards are accurate by checking them with other schools and at a formal moderation event.
- Although there has been improvement overall, further work is needed to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers. For some of these pupils, persistent absence has meant that they do not benefit from the strong teaching which takes place in school. The school responds very quickly when these pupils are absent from school and there are individual examples where this has had considerable impact. However, the most recent published attendance information suggests that this is still an issue.
- Leaders, teachers and support staff pay careful attention to the progress and needs of individual disadvantaged pupils. There is no doubt that these pupils are learning. However, leaders have not made comparison to the national rates of progress of pupils who are not disadvantaged and so cannot tell if they are learning fast enough. Planning documentation lacks precision about the impact that is expected from the targeted use of the pupil premium that is received to support them. Leaders are responding quickly to monitoring information about individual pupils but do not analyse performance of this group of pupils as a whole. Therefore, at this point, the improvement expected for Year 2 overall in 2018 is less certain for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planning documentation, such as the pupil premium strategy, is further refined so that there are clear and appropriate goals which governors can refer to when they check on improvement throughout the year
- the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils improves, so that it is in line with that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally who have similar starting points.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire 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 2016 and 2017. I looked at the school's website. I spoke with several parents at the gate and I considered 82 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, the Ofsted pupil and staff surveys and the results of recent school surveys of parents and of pupils. Meetings were held with you, school leaders and governors to discuss progress since the last inspection. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, the pupil premium strategy, evidence of leaders' monitoring, governors' minutes and visit reports, the single central record of the checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the safeguarding policy and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare. I talked with staff to make sure that 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 talked to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I talked to members of the school council who brought their work to show me and I observed the pupils at breaktimes.