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Miss Tessa Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Smith

Short inspection of Berwick Hills Primary 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are incredibly passionate about giving pupils the best possible educational experiences which help them develop as confident individuals who are successful in their learning. Leaders set high expectations for pupils and staff and they set aspirational targets to improve attainment and progress for pupils. You have been committed to recruiting the right staff to help you realise your vision for school improvement. The whole team works well together to achieve this.

At the last inspection, you were tasked with improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have introduced very effective systems for checking the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Teachers receive precise guidance on how to improve and are supported to do so through effective training and observing good practice. Meticulous tracking of pupils' progress helps identify any pupil who needs additional support. Additionally, leaders have introduced effective whole-school schemes of work for the teaching of English and mathematics. These are resulting in high expectations which are clear and understood by staff. Consequently, standards in English and mathematics are showing improvement. Outcomes improved in early years, phonics and at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics in 2017. The disappointing attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 and 2017 has now been addressed. Leaders' assessment information and work in lessons and books confirm that current pupils, in all key stages, are making good progress in English and mathematics. An increasing proportion of pupils are reaching age-related expectations. You are committed to securely embedding the newly implemented strategies so that these improving outcomes are sustained over

time.

The school's values run through all aspects of the school's work and promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Gold books, which follow pupils through school, celebrate their achievements over time. A cultural passport keeps a record of the varied opportunities which pupils have experienced. Playing an instrument, working with an artist, and participating in a community event are examples of the range of experiences which broaden pupils' horizons. Leaders also value pupil voice and encourage pupils to take responsibilities which help them to contribute to the life of the school. They do this with pride and enthusiasm.

Governors are committed to their roles and are proud of the difference they make to the lives of pupils in the local community. In each meeting, they consider how their actions are making a difference to pupils in school. This helps them to be ambitious for pupils and for leaders, and to stay focused on what is making a difference. Rigorous scrutiny of assessment data and their visits to school give them a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are determined for the school to be as inclusive as possible and they make sure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Governors are well equipped with appropriate skills to support them in providing effective challenge and support for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors are passionate about the importance of safeguarding. You have made sure that procedures are effective and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff training has had a positive impact, ensuring that adults who work in school are able to recognise and respond to possible signs of concern.

The care team keeps a close eye on the extensive caseload of vulnerable children. This helps them to identify where any action is needed. Leaders are tenacious in their approach and are not afraid to challenge external agencies. They make effective use of the early help process which supports families. Links with families are particularly successful and result in issues often being addressed before they escalate. The parent support adviser provides crucial advice and support in a non-threatening way. An earlier start to school has been made available to pupils. Pupils can have some toast on arrival and a settled start to the morning. This helps them to be in a good position to learn when school begins.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Pupils learn the skills needed to take responsibility for their behaviour and its effect on others. Peer mediators help others to resolve their differences so that behaviour is positive, and pupils get along well. The curriculum provides countless opportunities for pupils to learn how to be safe. Consequently, they talk with confidence about staying safe online and how to be safe on the road.

Inspection findings

- The overall proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been improving over time. However, it remains below the national average for boys and disadvantaged children. Leaders are aware that on entry to Nursery, boys have much lower starting points than girls. However, boys make good progress in Nursery so that they are in a strong position to learn, once they begin Reception. They continue to make good progress in Reception. You have already identified that by introducing two-year-old Nursery provision, children will be able to have an even stronger start to their learning and development. The early years leader has made sure that provision areas, both inside and outdoors, are boy-friendly and encourage boys to want to practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills when working independently. Staff have also been trained to assist boys in their play and support their achievement. Consequently, the proportion of boys, and disadvantaged children, reaching the early learning goals in reading, writing and numbers has improved this year. However, you acknowledge that there are some missed opportunities for teachers to develop children's letter formation and pencil grip. By Year 1, some pupils have still not mastered an appropriate pencil grip and, for some, this inhibits their writing.
- You have high expectations for pupils' reading and phonics development. Continued training for staff and the earlier introduction of phonics teaching from Nursery have supported improvement. You have ensured that phonics teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs and that assessment is used to quickly provide immediate intervention for pupils who need additional support. Consequently, the proportion of pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved over time, reaching above the national average in 2017. Figures have improved sharply for boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils make average progress in reading. Attainment is improving, both overall and for disadvantaged pupils, but remains below the national average. Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with increasingly challenging teaching to enable them to achieve well. A whole-school Shakespeare project is an example of how leaders are using drama to support pupils' language development. Similarly, you have made sure that vocabulary development is integrated throughout pupils' learning. A fortnightly cycle for the teaching of reading helps pupils to effectively build a range of skills which are supporting their understanding of the texts they read. It is resulting in very sophisticated discussions between pupils. For example, in Year 6, pupils were eager to share how their work on Shakespeare, and the use of drama, has helped them to develop an appreciation of characters' emotions. These strategies are transforming pupils' understanding of the texts they read and the subsequent writing they produce.
- Reading is promoted well throughout school. Pupils say they love reading and that staff are keen for them to develop good habits of reading regularly. Many pupils enjoy having access to the library at lunchtimes and choose to read in their free time. The high-quality texts, which are part of the English scheme of work, give pupils access to books which are appropriately challenging and stimulate their curiosity. Pupils talk about their enjoyment of these books and how they

inspire them to read other books by the same author.

- In key stage 1, reading is developing well. Attainment was below the national average in 2016 and 2017, but a much higher proportion of pupils are now meeting age-related expectations. You are determined to make sure that some of the new strategies that have been implemented become more embedded and that pupils' outcomes show sustained improvement over time.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence have been successful. This year, both figures are closer to the national average than they have been before. Rewards and celebration of good attendance have contributed to the improvements along with more firm action being taken when pupils are regularly absent. A focus on Reception attendance has been positive and leaders are now addressing attendance in Nursery to make sure that good habits are quickly established when children begin school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent and more rapid gains in pupils' attainment and progress in early years and key stage 1 are sustained so that an increasing proportion of pupils meet and exceed the expectations in English and mathematics by the end of each key stage
- teachers have consistently high expectations of children's letter formation and appropriate pencil grip, so these skills are established as quickly as possible.

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

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, leaders of English and early years, and the school business manager. I also met with three members of the governing body, including the vice-chair, and I met with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. Together with the English and early years leader, we scrutinised the work of a sample of pupils. I listened to five pupils read. I spoke with several parents and carers at the start of the school day. I talked to a sample of pupils and staff and

considered the nine responses to the staff survey and the 13 responses to the pupil survey.