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Mr Dan Walton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Walton

### **Short inspection of Langley Park Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment in the summer term of 2017, you have established a team of leaders who work collaboratively towards your clear vision for the school. They demonstrate a keen awareness of their responsibilities to improve the school's performance. The questionnaires completed by staff during the inspection indicate that you have their full support. In the short time since your arrival, you have established new systems to encourage positive behaviour from pupils. You have taken steps to ensure that the beginning of the school day is calm and productive. Consequently, in most classrooms, pupils are purposeful and respond quickly to instructions from adults. At breaktime, pupils play well together. They were eager to tell me that they make good friends at school. Pupils report that they enjoy their learning. They were particularly proud to show me the impressive garden, abundant with fruit and vegetables, that they carefully nurture in the school grounds.

During the inspection, a few parents raised some well-founded concerns about instability in staffing in the school in recent years. This unsettled period has had an impact on some pupils' progress. Consequently, the standards attained by pupils have fluctuated since the previous inspection. Your self-evaluation is accurate in identifying the most pressing priorities for the school. However, turbulence in staffing has made it more difficult for you to secure the improvements which are necessary. You have correctly focused your attention on establishing a more stable staffing position and the school is

now better-placed to move forward.

Leaders, including the recently appointed early years leader, have worked quickly to improve aspects of the provision for children in the early years. Two-year-olds and children in the Nursery are making stronger progress as a result. However, the progress made by children in the Reception Year is not strong enough and, consequently, too few children are well-prepared for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1.

During this inspection, I was keen to explore the progress and attainment of pupils in reading, including phonics. Leaders' work over the current academic year has ensured that those pupils in Year 2 who had fallen behind in their phonics have now caught up. However, not enough pupils are making sufficient progress in phonics across the Reception Year and Year 1 to reach the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 1.

You have acted to improve the quality of the teaching of reading across the school. This is beginning to make a difference to the attainment of pupils, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6. However, your assessment information shows that progress in reading remains variable across the school.

I also worked with you to review the provision and the outcomes for low-attaining pupils and those who are disadvantaged. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching is not consistent in ensuring that these pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Governors are clear about the school's priorities for improvement. The new chair of the governing body has taken appropriate steps to strengthen the systems to hold leaders to account. Governors are expected to ask challenging questions of leaders and this is a routine aspect of the reports from different committees. Governors receive detailed information about the attainment of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. However, they accept that they have not fully evaluated the impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

- Leaders have ensured that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Thorough checks ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. Staff receive appropriate training and frequent updates to ensure that they understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe.
- You have introduced a new system to record your work to support pupils who are at risk of significant harm. I was impressed by the detailed information you maintain and the clear evidence of your actions to pursue other agencies when you are dissatisfied with their response to ensure that pupils are safe. You treat safeguarding as the highest priority.
- You are making good use of the same system to keep a close check on behaviour incidents in the school. This enables you to demonstrate that these are reducing over time. You remain focused on working with a small group of pupils who need additional

support to manage their behaviour.

- Since the previous inspection, attendance has declined to below the national average and too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This academic year, you have introduced new systems to monitor and follow up the attendance of pupils. You have strengthened your work with individual families to tackle absence. Most recently, you have changed pupils' annual reports to include a more detailed focus on attendance. As yet, the impact of this work is limited to a small reduction in the persistent absence of pupils. Your development plan accurately reflects that this remains an urgent priority for the school to ensure that no pupils are disadvantaged by poor attendance.

## **Inspection findings**

- Following a review of early years provision, supported by the local authority, leaders have made significant improvements to the learning environment for children. Both indoors and outdoors, children have access to a wide range of resources and a varied curriculum. The early years leader has ensured that action is taken at an early stage to secure the right support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- In the Nursery and provision for two-year-olds, adults model new language effectively to support children's communication and language development. Staff have begun to increase the challenge for children in the Nursery so that they get an earlier start to learning about phonics. However, the quality of teaching varies across the early years. In the Reception Year, teaching is not focused precisely enough on the aspects of children's development which are weaker. When children choose their own learning, adults are not sufficiently attentive to ensure that children's play is purposeful and supporting their learning and development. Some children who join the school with skills that are lower than those typically seen for their age are not making strong enough progress.
- You have reviewed the curriculum for reading and introduced a new approach to teaching reading. This has increased the emphasis on the development of pupils' comprehension skills. This stronger focus has helped to raise the standards in some classes this year. However, your own monitoring demonstrates that current pupils' progress is still variable across the school.
- Over time, the standards attained by pupils in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have declined and are now below the national average. Leaders have provided additional training for staff this academic year to refresh their professional knowledge of phonics teaching. The phonics leader has been given time to monitor the quality of teaching, to check pupils' progress and to model teaching to others. This has contributed to good gains this year for those pupils in Year 2 who needed to catch up. However, the progress made by pupils is not consistently strong in the early years and in Year 1. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are given reading books which match their phonic ability and that pupils are supported to develop reading fluency through speedy recognition of letters and the sounds they represent.
- While teaching enables some pupils to make good progress, it is less consistent in supporting lower-attaining pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to make

strong progress and to catch up to the standards expected for their age. Pupils' workbooks show that, too often, in reading, writing and mathematics, teaching does not get to the heart of the issues that are holding pupils back. For example, the basic skills of sentence construction, letter formation and punctuation are not addressed well enough. In mathematics, gaps in pupils' basic skills, such as their knowledge of number bonds and multiplication tables, prevent them from making strong progress in their mathematical understanding.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers make good use of the new materials you have introduced this year to support pupils' mathematical reasoning and their problem-solving skills. However, your monitoring has identified that some staff are less clear about the small steps of progress pupils need to make in order to master mathematical concepts. You have also identified that teachers do not assess what pupils can do accurately. This limits teachers' ability to plan precisely to meet pupils' needs. You have plans in place to adapt the curriculum for mathematics and intend to make changes for the new academic year.
- At the previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that subject leaders, particularly those for English and mathematics, had the right skills to secure improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils. Leaders at all levels feel empowered by you to take responsibility for their subjects. They are involved appropriately in monitoring the quality of teaching and, where necessary, have received training to help them in their roles. Teachers routinely receive feedback on the quality of their work. However, this feedback needs to focus more on evaluating the difference that teaching makes to pupils' learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance improves urgently so that it is at least in line with the national average
- teaching in the early years is more consistent in securing strong progress to enable a higher proportion of children to reach the good level of development expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year
- pupils' progress in phonics improves so that a higher proportion reach the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 1
- the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is more precisely matched to the needs of low-attaining pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, so that their progress is consistently strong across the school
- teachers accurately assess what pupils can do in mathematics and use this information to plan the correct next steps for pupils to support their mastery of mathematical concepts
- the governing body evaluates the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils thoroughly
- leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, and any subsequent feedback to staff, is sharply focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

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 two 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 at breaktime. I listened to a group of pupils read. I reviewed examples of pupils' work. I also met with two newly qualified teachers to discuss the support they have received. 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 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a family at the start of the school day. I also reviewed 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 46 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.