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24 September 2018

Mrs Angela Vear
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Vear

Short inspection of Lumley Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 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 March 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 have cultivated a culture of high expectation that is shared by your staff. You and your team have sustained high standards of teaching and learning that have contributed to strong rates of progress for pupils. Your team has actively raised pupils' awareness of equalities and fundamental human rights, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

You and your team have responded well to the more strenuous academic demands of the new national curriculum. Through focused teaching and effective curriculum planning, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics over time has been extremely good, with progress in 2016 and 2017 well above average. Unvalidated outcomes for 2018 show that high standards have been sustained, with a marked improvement in pupils' progress in writing. Disadvantaged pupils have often made outstanding progress by the end of key stage 2. Current progress information shows that pupils are continuing to make good progress in other year groups, although some differences remain in the proportions of disadvantaged pupils reaching greater depths of understanding.

You have addressed many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have developed the skills of your teachers in a highly effective manner and maintained a consistent focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning. A number of your teachers have developed expertise in subjects such as mathematics and science and have provided support to other colleagues within

and beyond the school. You have used performance management and monitoring systems to make teachers more accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes. In 2017, your team introduced strategies to improve pupils' writing that contributed to much stronger progress by the end of key stage 2 in 2018. You have successfully built the expertise of your team through development opportunities such as devising curriculum plans and presenting initiatives directly to the governing body. These actions have created a knowledgeable and well-motivated team and supported ongoing improvement.

You and your team evaluate the school's work in an honest and accurate manner. You invite external scrutiny from your local authority development partner to further check on the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress. Your team review pupils' progress at regular intervals and plan interventions and additional support to address any areas of underachievement. School action plans show a clear awareness of improvement priorities and reflect your determination to secure consistency in the school improvement journey. These actions have contributed to improving progress in recent years.

Your team has developed many aspects of the curriculum in a considered manner. In English and mathematics, your teachers have reflected upon what ideas such as 'mastery' may mean, by enabling pupils to refine and deepen their knowledge and practise their skills. In science, pupils have regular opportunities to work scientifically and apply their knowledge in experimental contexts. In subjects such as history and geography, pupils do not consistently develop knowledge, skills and understanding to the same high quality. However, you have shown a commitment to developing pupils' knowledge and experience across the wider curriculum, and this is reflected in the range of awards the school has received. These awards recognise achievement and commitment in areas such as the arts, sport, science and outdoor learning.

Your team has taken significant action to promote pupils' understanding of a wide range of equalities. You have integrated the teaching of rights and responsibilities into the curriculum in your work as a rights-respecting school. You have also developed pupils' awareness of differences in sexual orientation and family structures through your 'educate and celebrate' initiatives. In discussion, pupils talked eloquently about the need to respect differences in religion, race and sexual orientation. Both boys and girls have joint opportunities to take part in a wide range of sports, including football, netball and tag rugby. Your team has been rightly commended for its work to promote equalities and place the needs of the child at the centre of its work.

Governors are committed to the school and share your aspirations. They are aware of the significant improvements you have led and sustained. They are kept up to date on pupils' progress and welfare through your regular reports. Governors have worked with your educational development partner to develop their expertise and understanding of their responsibilities to evaluate the school's effectiveness. They have a good awareness of the effect of additional funding and have taken part in a range of safeguarding training. Governors share your commitment to improvement

by completing regular audits of their own skills so that they can apply their expertise and interests as effectively as possible.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously, and safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders make appropriate checks on the suitability of adults working at the school and are trained in safer recruitment. Leaders keep staff up to date with safeguarding training, and all staff are trained in the government's 'Prevent' duty. Governors have received training on a number of safeguarding issues and have a good knowledge of the actions the school takes to keep pupils safe online. Leaders pursue concerns over pupils' safety thoroughly, although written records do not always fully reflect the actions they have taken. Leaders recently commissioned an external review of safeguarding to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Leaders work closely with pupils to develop their awareness of safety. Pupils demonstrated a strong understanding of the actions they can take to avoid the potential threats they can face online. The vast majority of pupils spoken with said that they feel safe in school and that they are confident that teachers and adults would effectively resolve any incidents of bullying. School staff have actively promoted equalities and the fundamental rights of children, creating a climate where pupils' welfare is paramount. Pupils have opportunities to work with external groups such as the police and the NSPCC to further enhance their safety and well-being.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, leaders and teachers introduced new approaches to improve pupils' progress in writing. Pupils now focus upon a narrower range of genres each term. This is enabling them to develop a more specific understanding of styles of writing and build their expertise through regular practice in their dedicated writing books. These initiatives contributed to pupils making much-improved and very good progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2018.
- Leaders and teachers monitor pupils' progress in reading and mathematics at regular intervals. This enables them to respond swiftly to any emerging underachievement. Subject leaders have developed well-considered curriculum overviews that inform teachers' planning. In books, pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their fluency in a range of mathematical operations and solve more complex problems. In English, pupils are encouraged to analyse challenging and thematically rich novels. They are also introduced to Shakespeare at an early stage. This combination of a rich curriculum in core areas and effective teaching over time helps pupils to make very good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers are committed to providing pupils with knowledge and experiences that support their broader academic development. Teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to think scientifically and apply their knowledge in a range of experimental contexts. Pupils participate in a wide range of sports and have

regular opportunities to develop their self-confidence and teamwork by working outdoors. On occasions, pupils do not acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects such as history and geography to the same depth that they do in science.

- Leaders' promotion of fundamental human rights is used as a central theme that infuses many aspects of curriculum planning. Pupils can talk articulately about the rights of the child and show a respect for important equality issues. Pupils are willing to speak out against inequality. In 2016, pupils received national press coverage by writing to the Football Association to challenge what they perceived as sexist advice in a leaflet intended to encourage girls' participation in football.
- Leaders have raised the importance of good attendance with parents and carers and worked with the local authority attendance team and family liaison officer to support pupils who have lower rates of attendance. The most recent attendance figures show that the majority of pupils have levels of attendance that are in line with those seen nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent and persistently absent than their peers.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a thorough awareness of the needs of the pupils who require additional support. She works with infant school colleagues to manage effective transition for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Parents are given regular opportunities to review their child's progress and many are highly appreciative of the support they receive. Support plans for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities clearly diagnose their needs, although they do not consistently outline actions to support their progress sharply enough.
- Pupils take a pride in their school and in their community. This is reflected in the high standards of presentation that are consistently evident in their books. Teachers have created a highly stimulating learning environment. This celebrates pupils' work and achievements, while providing prompts and cues that support learning.
- Leaders have developed good relationships with parents and the community. Specific workshops have been provided to offer insight into the curriculum and into important issues such as online safety. These partnerships have supported pupils' academic progress and their personal welfare.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- extend the rich knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils acquire in much of the wider curriculum to subjects such as history and geography
- intensify actions to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- use the expertise of the SENCo to refine support plans to further accelerate the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of the inspection, I looked at the actions teachers and leaders were taking to improve pupils' progress in writing. I also explored whether strong rates of progress in reading and mathematics were being sustained across a range of year groups. I also considered the wider curriculum and the work of teachers to create a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum. I also looked at the actions leaders had taken to improve attendance for groups of pupils.

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and middle leaders. I also spoke with six members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and discussed pupils' learning with them in lessons. I met the educational development partner from the local authority. I looked, with you, at learning in lessons and I also looked at pupils' work in books. I examined school improvement priorities and discussed pupils' progress. I looked at documents, including the school's self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records and support plans for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record. I considered 24 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and 15 free-text responses from parents. I also considered 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.