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Mr Mark Burgess
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burgess

Short inspection of Bedlington Station Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 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. Leaders work hard to provide effective leadership to the school. Since taking up your post in September 2018, you have reviewed the school improvement plans and you are clear about what the school does well and the areas in which it needs to improve. As a result of this, your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses highlights the areas that are not as effective as you would like them to be.

Staff are proud to be part of the school and feel well supported by the leadership team in all aspects of their work. Leaders have high aspirations for their pupils and earnestly seek to overcome the barriers that pupils have to their learning. You affirm, in the words of your school song, that 'from tiny acorns, the mighty oaks grow'. Leaders encourage pupils to 'reach far, stand tall, be brave, give your all' and your pupils respond positively. They 'dream big and sing proud'. These lyrics are positively reflected in the conduct and approach of the pupils at Bedlington Station Primary School.

At the previous inspection in June 2014, leaders were asked to raise standards in writing at key stage 2 by ensuring that there are more opportunities for extended writing, particularly in subjects other than English. Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of writing have had a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. For the last three years, progress in writing has been above national averages.

Additionally, leaders were also asked to provide more 'boy-friendly' writing tasks

that interest boys and, therefore, improve their skills. Leaders tackled this issue by introducing new books and 'class readers' aimed at boys, and some successes were evident in 2017.

However, the actions that leaders have taken have not improved outcomes for key stage 2 pupils in reading. You have identified that improving the teaching of reading so that teachers are adept at teaching specific reading skills is an area of focus. Leaders have identified that pupils have not always been properly prepared for the national reading tests and have recently introduced plans to include more experience of different styles of reading assessment. You have identified the need for pupils to be taught and develop the more sophisticated skills of inference and deduction to improve their reading. It is too early to assess the impact of these plans.

Pupils said that they are happy in school. They enjoy learning. Excellent rapport exists between staff and pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are well mannered and respectful. They have a very good understanding of your code of conduct and all know that 'green is great' is an indication that they are behaving well. Pupils also speak positively of your rewards, such as 'station stars', 'ice-cream Fridays' and 'star tea' with the headteacher. Most parents and carers spoken to during the inspection, and those who completed Ofsted's online survey, were positive about the school. They particularly appreciate the accessibility of teachers and the pastoral care and support given to their children. Parents describe Bedlington Station as 'warm' and 'caring', with teachers who 'go above and beyond'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are central to the work of the school. Leaders ensure that statutory checks are made and that they adhere to safer recruitment processes. Pupils state that they feel safe and that they are well cared for by all members of staff. They are confident in accessing support through effective systems such as 'Bubble Time Pegs' or in 'The Rainbow Station'.

Pupils spoke with enthusiasm of the personal, social and health education that they receive, and they have responded positively to the introduction of 'Jigsaw Assemblies'. They have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils are articulate and keen to share their positive experiences of school. Pupils mix well together at playtime and lunchtime. They recognise the value of respect and diversity. This is reflected in the quality of relationships that exist across the school, which is characterised by positivity, courtesy and joy.

Staff understand how to apply child protection and safeguarding procedures. Training is up to date and this includes training on the protecting of pupils from the influences of radicalisation. The school works closely with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported. Leaders have introduced clear, focused and robust safeguarding policies. However, documentation and written records do not always reflect this rigour and the quality of support available. It is unclear from

school records how leaders use and evaluate the frequency of concerns, in order to provide targeted support for the pupils in their care.

Inspection findings

- In early years, leaders have improved the teaching of writing so that it more precisely meets children's individual needs. Teachers have also considered the ways in which they can remove the obstacles which limit children's progress in writing. Leaders have put in place structured activities to develop children's fine motor control. Children are supported at a level appropriate to their stage of development. Writing is encouraged, valued and celebrated. This value is reflected around the school in 'writings frames' and the 'gold gallery'.
- The teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1 is developing pupils' skills in blending and sounding letters so that they can read unfamiliar words. As a result, the percentage of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent across the school. A group of pupils spoke very positively about reading and how they read every day in school. However, the school's reading records demonstrate that the frequency of pupils reading with adults is very low. Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to practise and consolidate their reading skills. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 do not make strong progress in reading.
- Your 'creative curriculum' is rich and engaging. It captures pupils' interest and helps them to understand the wider world in which they live. Pupils value these opportunities and speak with enthusiasm about 'Jigsaw Assemblies' and 'Professor Crankpot', and they talk about learning as 'fun' and 'interesting'. However, pupils do not develop their scientific skills, knowledge and vocabulary systematically and so do not make consistently good progress in this area of the curriculum. Leaders have developed plans to improve pupils' progress in science, but it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to take on additional responsibilities, such as their roles as 'playground buddy', 'station buddy', 'reading buddy' or 'lunchtime buddy'. They also spoke positively about the 'school council' and the opportunity to have a say in decision-making in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the safeguarding practice reflects the school's safeguarding policy and staff systematically record actions and interventions, ensuring robust follow-up where appropriate
- teachers routinely teach pupils the skills that they need to develop their reading and provide opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate these skills regularly

- pupils in all classes are provided with a rich and stimulating science curriculum that systematically develops and improves their scientific skills, knowledge and vocabulary.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. Together, with you, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. We also looked in depth at pupils' reading records, writing books and other work. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I met with a group of pupils from early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I listened to eight pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. Consideration was given to 27 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 19 questionnaire responses from staff. Consideration was also given to 19 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records. I also met with your designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe.