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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Jude Long
Headteacher
Humshaugh Church of England First School
Humshaugh
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 4AA

Dear Mrs Long

Short inspection of Humshaugh Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Following a significant level of staff turbulence, you took up the post of headteacher in September 2017. You and your team have created a safe and caring environment where pupils love to learn. As headteacher, you provide determined, dedicated and astute leadership and this is reflected in the views of staff, children and parents. Everyone is proud of their village school and proud of what you have created – a lively, stimulating learning environment where everyone's view is valued. Parents who I spoke with informally at the start of the day were effusive in their praise for the school. One parent described the school as the 'heartbeat of the village community', while another said, 'This school is 110% good, there is nothing to fault!' These views were reinforced in the large number of text responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, many of which commented on the safe nurturing environment, high expectations and the dedication of you and your staff. Members of staff who talked to me and those who responded in Ofsted's online staff survey said that they are proud to work in the school. They respect and value your leadership qualities and all say that the school has improved since the last inspection.

Pupils are equally supportive and were eager to tell me how much they enjoy school. They spoke with great enthusiasm about performing arts, visits, clubs, the Christian ethos and charity work. High attendance figures and evidence from Ofsted's online survey of pupil views support this.

Your self-evaluation summary paints an accurate picture of the school and the school development plan describes how you will secure further improvement. This ensures that the quality of teaching across the school is going from strength to strength. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. At the end of key stage 1 in 2018, results were higher than the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. All children in Reception in 2018 achieved a good level of development and all pupils in Year 1 met the standard in the phonics screening check.

You and your leadership team have tackled the areas for improvement highlighted in your last inspection thoroughly and successfully. The mathematics leader has brought about many changes. A new mathematics scheme has been introduced with an emphasis on practical work. This has helped pupils develop competence when using the four rules of number and their problem-solving skills have improved. A consistency of approach in terms of teaching, feedback and presentation has been a focus in mathematics. Support from the school improvement partner and local partnership of schools is effective. Ambitious end-of-year targets are set and frequent moderation of work by the senior leader has also aided progress. At key stage 1 in 2018, nearly all pupils reached the expected standard in mathematics with around one third achieving the higher standard. Pupils still need to further develop mathematical skills across a range of subjects. At the time of the last inspection, your predecessor was also asked to improve the quality of provision for Reception children. Considerable work has been undertaken in the past year to improve in this regard. A new outdoor area has been created and new equipment purchased. Boys are now more engaged in their learning and the most able children are challenged through individual programmes of work. The new early years leader was keen to explain how home-school links had been strengthened and how this was having an impact on learning. Although the outdoor area has been transformed, there is still some minor work to be done to increase the number of opportunities to develop and use number and reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding leader, you have a comprehensive knowledge of those pupils who are at risk and you have forged close partnerships with outside agencies. You ensure that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all records are of high quality and meticulously kept. All checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. Safeguarding training is a priority and, during the past year, all staff and governors have been involved in child protection, 'Prevent' duty and e-safety training.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they say that bullying does not happen, but, if it did, they would tell an adult immediately. Pupils are supportive of each other and they all play well together regardless of age or gender. One pupil summed this up when saying, 'Everyone gets on well together.' Pupils understand some of the dangers related to use of the internet and were able to explain what to do to stay safe when online. All were keen to tell me about a recent visit by a police officer who came into school to talk about road safety and stranger danger.

The views of the pupils were reinforced by their parents. Indeed, all of those who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire 'strongly agreed' that their child 'felt safe' and was 'well looked after' at school, and many submitted written comments praising staff for their caring approach.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry related to how well the most able pupils achieve in writing. This is because, over the past three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in writing at the end of key stage 1 has been marginally above the national average, but slightly lower than that achieved in reading and mathematics. You have identified this and are focused on improving writing. The English leader explained how pupils are given the opportunity to write in a meaningful way across a range of subjects. Themes such as 'Harry Potter – witchcraft and wizardry' and 'The Iron Man' have brought about an enthusiasm for writing. In key stage 1 there is a focus on teaching fundamental writing skills. The 'purple polishing pen system' provides effective feedback and encourages pupils to reflect on their work. When we visited Class 3, pupils were clearly developing good skills when writing persuasive adverts for magical products. Pupils were keen to tell me how rhetorical questions, alliteration, rhyme and punctuation could improve an advert. Work in pupils' books reflected good progress. However, there is no evidence of a cohesive handwriting scheme and this means that the presentation of work is, at times, untidy.
- My next line of enquiry focused on provision for pupils in the early years. The recently appointed early years leader explained how individual programmes of study have been developed to provide challenge for all. Areas of learning have been adapted to stretch the most able, who also have the opportunity to work alongside pupils in Year 1. Observation of pupils and my review of learning journals confirm that challenge is high and pupils are well prepared, both socially and academically. The teaching of phonics in early years is a particular strength and this is reflected in the phonics screening check scores and the key stage 1 reading results in 2018.
- My third line of enquiry considered pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and how the school meets this. You have been key to the establishment of a curriculum that is engaging, relevant and meets the needs of the children well. Whole-school themes have been developed and displays around the school showcase some excellent humanities work. One example is the Roman Artefacts Museum which was established following a visit to nearby Chesters Roman Fort, where pupils developed archaeological skills to analyse historical evidence. In science, many practical tasks are enhanced by visits to venues such as the Discovery Museum and Centre for Life. Pupils talked with great enthusiasm about dance, drama and music and were eager to tell me about recent shows that they had staged for the local community. These included 'Jonah and the Whale', 'Hoodwinked' and 'Lights, Camel, Action'. Visits to the theatre are used well to enhance education in the performing arts. Although pupils study different religions as part of religious education, opportunities to

develop cultural awareness in other curriculum areas are sometimes missed.

- Reading is a strength across the school. Year 1 phonics screening check results are consistently higher than the national average. By the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading is at least 10% higher than national averages, both at expected and at the greater depth standards. Pupils demonstrate a love of reading and were able to talk knowledgeably about their favourite authors to me. Those who read to me were able to do so with fluency and expression.
- Leadership and governance are strong and have moved the school successfully through a significant level of staff turbulence. The governing body has a comprehensive knowledge of the school and a good mix of skills. Its members make regular visits and, during the past year, have been involved in supporting curriculum enrichment weeks and sports clubs. One governor volunteers as an extra teaching assistant on a weekly basis. Governors are passionate about the school and were able to describe accurately to me the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in the management of the school and provide strong support and challenge in equal measure. Governors are aware of potential changes and challenges presented by possible local authority reorganisation. All are working hard to ensure that the school is sustainable and continues to provide an effective education for pupils in the local community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to improve the teaching of writing continue to be implemented so that a greater percentage of pupils achieve a higher standard
- a universal handwriting scheme is developed to ensure a consistent approach to the presentation of written work
- further opportunities are created to extend pupils' knowledge of other cultures.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I looked specifically at safeguarding, attainment and progress in writing, provision for early years children and how you provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the subject leader for English, the early years leader, the local authority school improvement partner and seven members of the governing body. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data and the recent visit notes from the local authority school improvement partner. I spoke with a small number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with three groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. The third group described the wider curriculum and showed me examples of work from a range of subject areas. You and I observed a range of learning across all classes, including work in phonics, mathematics and writing. We also visited the early years to gauge the quality of work outdoors. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of the written work from several year groups and looked at the learning journals for several early years children. I also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey of pupil and staff views.