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Mrs Jackie Glass  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Glass

### **Short inspection of Bowburn Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2019, 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 November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Since your appointment in September 2015, you have provided well-focused leadership which ensures that pupils develop strong personal skills and make good academic progress. Along with your leaders and governors, you have an accurate view of the strengths and priorities for improvement to ensure the further development of the school. This is evident in the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The strengths identified in pupils' behaviour found at the previous inspection have been maintained. During the inspection, the overall picture was of a calm, friendly learning environment. Pupils' personal development and welfare are very important to you, your staff and governors. For example, the introduction of support by counsellors provides additional provision for pupils if they have concerns or anxieties. Pupils told me that they found the availability of this support reassuring and they understood how to access this should they need it.

The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection of your school have been addressed or are moving in the right direction. One area to improve was to accelerate the progress of all pupils, particularly in reading. In the last two years, pupils have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has not been as consistently strong. In 2018, there was a notable change in the improvements to the results achieved by pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, by the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, leaders and

governors were not complacent and commissioned a review of the effectiveness of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This has resulted in a sharply focused pupil premium strategy. The quality of the teaching of reading seen during the inspection demonstrated that much progress has been made here. However, some aspects of your new strategy are not yet consistently embedded in teaching across the school.

The second area to improve was to strengthen the role of other school leaders. The members of your senior leadership team now all have a key role in driving improvement. For example, the subject leaders for English and mathematics have a clear understanding of the priorities for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in their subjects. They receive relevant training and meet with teachers from other schools to seek out effective practice to introduce into your school. These leaders have a structured programme for checking for improvement. Their actions have had a positive effect on pupils' learning in English and mathematics.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training, so they know the school's procedures and how to keep pupils safe. Documentation is well maintained, and the school's online records enable effective organisation and analysis of safeguarding information. You and your parent support adviser have a good understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. There is a determined approach by school leaders and staff to secure the necessary support from a range of agencies when pupils require this. Parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and your own school's recent parents' survey show that parents and carers believe that their child feels safe and happy at your school.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your staff have focused on raising the profile of reading. You have improved the quality of reading books in the library, classrooms and the books that pupils take home to read. The subject leader for English has sought the views of pupils to identify what books they would like to be available in school. These strategies are motivating pupils to develop a love of reading.
- Specific actions have been taken to improve the teaching of reading. There are now more regular opportunities in place to improve pupils' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Where pupils are not reading at the standard expected for their age, a range of additional activities are provided to close learning gaps. Systems to assess and record pupils' reading knowledge and skills are in place. Overall, these approaches have had a positive effect on pupils' reading attainment. However, there is still some work to be completed to ensure that these approaches are embedded and used consistently by all staff across the

school.

- Pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home. Your colour banding system intends to help pupils have a book which is matched to their reading ability. However, this does not always ensure that less-able pupils have books that are well matched to their level of phonics skills and so they struggle with the text and make less progress than they could.
- In 2017, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in reading and mathematics, was too low. You have taken steps to address this and results for these pupils by the end of Year 6 were greatly improved in 2018. Consequently, their attainment was much closer to that of other pupils nationally.
- Following the local authority review of your use of pupil premium funding, you have put in place a plan to further improve the academic results and personal development for disadvantaged pupils. Some actions are already being implemented; for example, the deputy headteacher has introduced an approach which supports teachers in identifying where these pupils need additional support to make good progress and to reach their aspirational attainment targets. This plan is in its early stages of implementation and remains an area where leaders and governors continue to focus. The school's pupil progress information shows there is still more to do to further improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- School staff make effective use of behaviour management systems and well-planned teaching to create a positive learning environment. Pupils told me that some of the best things about their school were that teachers are kind, caring and supportive and that they helped them to learn across a range of subjects. Leaders and staff meet regularly to consider if pupils have any specific needs where additional emotional or social support may be required. Where this is the case, specific support from the parent support adviser and school counsellors is provided for pupils. Leaders also draw effectively on relevant support from other agencies. This well-targeted support has ensured that any pupil vulnerable to exclusion receives appropriate provision. Consequently, exclusion rates have fallen substantially over recent years and exclusion is now a very rare occurrence.
- Governors are ambitious to secure the best personal development and learning outcomes for pupils. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Governors hold leaders to account successfully, including how effectively the additional pupil premium funding is used. They ensure that safeguarding procedures and policies are applied consistently.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- actions already taken to improve the quality of the teaching of reading and assessment and recording approaches are embedded and applied consistently across the school
- reading books and texts selected for lower-attaining pupils are better matched to these pupils' reading and phonics skills

- the pupil premium strategy devised following the recently commissioned local authority review is implemented and continues to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Michael Reeves  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, your subject leaders for English and mathematics, and the parent support adviser. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. My discussions with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with additional information. I considered school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, alongside the school's survey of parents' views. I reviewed the four responses to the staff survey. Alongside you, I visited lessons and small pupil groups to observe the teaching of reading. We also looked at a sample of pupils' reading comprehension books from across the school. I listened to some pupils read within lessons and individually. I considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, exclusions and bullying.