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Mrs B Fellowes-Prynne  
Headteacher  
Chopwell Primary School  
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NE17 7HS

Dear Mrs Fellowes-Prynne

### **Short inspection of Chopwell Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017, 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 September 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Working alongside a supportive governing body, your experienced and skilful leadership has brought about improvements to teaching and learning. There is a tangible drive and sense of urgency to provide high-quality opportunities which allow pupils to thrive, an ambition shared by all staff. You have rigorously addressed any issues of underperformance, and have brought together a skilled and enthusiastic teaching team.

You have accurately identified the school's strengths and current priorities and detail further actions to address these priorities in the comprehensive and perceptive school development plan. You recognise that some of the actions you list could be more precise so that governors can keep a closer check on the impact of your work on outcomes for pupils.

You have brought a steady hand during recent staffing changes, skilfully minimising any negative impact on pupils' outcomes. Improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now accelerating quickly the rates of progress of current pupils. You and other school leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching, with an emphasis on analysis of work in pupils' books. You acknowledge that the many new whole-school initiatives and strategies to further improve teaching are not yet fully impacting on outcomes for pupils.

Pupils' personal development and excellent attitudes to learning remain key strengths of your inclusive school. They take great pride in their work, and are intrinsically motivated and determined to succeed. Pupils develop good citizenship skills, being keen to take on responsibilities through roles such as class monitor or house captain, or be voted on to the school council. Pupils benefit from the school's strong international links, especially with Japan and China, developing a good understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Because teaching is far more consistent, pupils' progress and attainment have improved, as demonstrated by statutory assessment in 2016 compared to 2015. Progress and attainment are continuing to improve. Teachers use open questioning well, allowing pupils time to answer at length. Teachers amend activities when needed, based on ongoing assessment. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. Pupils respond well to the additional tasks and challenges provided to consolidate their understanding. A large majority of pupils in each year group are on track to reach standards expected for their age by the end of the academic year.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You effectively undertake the role of the designated safeguarding leader. Policies, procedures and records are of high quality and are up to date. Summary records of 'safeguarding cause for concern' forms are meticulously kept. The recent safeguarding audit by an external consultant highlights the school's strength in this area, and its determination to leave no stone unturned in its duty to keep pupils safe.

There are very few records of behaviour incidents or alleged bullying, and pupils categorically stated that no bullying happens at Chopwell Primary. All staff are appropriately trained and have access to well-written policies and guidance. As a result, they have a secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding.

Pupils are very knowledgeable about bullying and e-safety. Pupils know how to stay safe and free from worries while in school. Pupils value having 'play buddies' ('Choppies') around at breaktime. They understand how to avoid situations that may prove dangerous when not at school.

The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the friendly school community is very evident. The personal development and welfare of all pupils are key areas of focus for the school, and this is exemplified by the work of the school counsellor. Pupils know the school's 'Golden Rules' very well, and abide by them. Their confidence in staff in school to keep them safe is well placed, and underpins their exemplary behaviour in class and around school.

## Inspection findings

- You have taken determined and rigorous actions to accelerate the progress of current pupils through improved teaching and learning. You have been ably supported by the leadership team and the governing body. Work seen in pupils' books during the inspection and analysis of the school's tracking data demonstrate strong progress over the autumn term for nearly all current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. You are yet to see the impact of agreed strategies and actions to improve teaching on published outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are skilled in their roles, bringing a range of transferable professional skills. They know the school very well and the journey it has taken to reach this point. Governors are proud of the school and the improvements already in place. They are passionate about providing the very best for the pupils, tackling difficult decisions head on.
- Governors take nothing at face value. They question and challenge very effectively, and offer good support to senior leaders. However, governors do not ensure that the impact of actions in the school improvement plans align closely enough to the impact on pupil outcomes.
- Children make a fast start in their learning in the early years. They play and learn happily together. Children are making increasingly rapid progress in their understanding of number and in their reading and writing skills. In Nursery, we observed children happily developing their phonics knowledge by identifying objects from a bag which began with the letter 's'.
- The school supports the learning and development of two-year-old children very well, ensuring that they get off to a fast start when they begin Nursery. A small group of children enjoyed making an animal hat, gluing on paper animals and coloured rice grains, showing great concentration and improving fine motor skills.
- Pupils are getting off to a good start in reading. The systematic and rigorous teaching of phonics starts in Nursery and moves into Reception. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read well to the inspector and were able to build and blend unknown words. The effective teaching of phonics continues across key stage 1. It has not yet had sufficient time to increase the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1, which remains below average.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to use their developing English skills in extended writing activities, often linked to the topic or class novel they are studying. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed reading two poems by Gervase Phinn on 'Bonfire Night', deepening their understanding of figurative language by discussing the author's use of metaphor, simile and personification.
- Teachers pitch work well to match pupils' abilities, including for the most able pupils. Teachers' feedback deepens pupils' understanding effectively. Pupils have a strong work ethic and show high levels of independence and cooperation in lessons. They are actively involved in their learning.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of number, and are stretched and challenged in problem-solving activities. Pupils observed in Year 2 made different

number sentences with three numbers totalling 15 or 20, while Year 6 pupils had to use brackets to find a number of different answers to a four-digit number sentence.

- The school has many strategies to encourage and celebrate pupils' regular and punctual attendance. However, you recognise that currently these have minimal impact on improving the attendance of a large group of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, some of whom are regularly and persistently absent.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planned actions for school improvement are sharply focused on their impact on outcomes for pupils
- the teaching of phonics is more effective so that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in Year 1 increases
- the rates of attendance for pupils improve quickly, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent falls, particularly for 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 Gateshead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Scott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the chair, and other members of the governing body. You and I visited lessons in each key stage. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school and looked in their books, both in lessons and in meetings. I listened to some pupils read. A range of documents were considered relating to safeguarding, performance management, governors' meetings, and external evaluations of the school. I also considered the school's development plan, the curriculum and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments.