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Mr Paul Hawthornthwaite  
Headteacher  
Longshaw Community Junior School  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mr Hawthornthwaite

### **Short inspection of Longshaw Community Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 May 2013.

#### **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 created a forward-thinking, ambitious culture within the school that is focused upon personal and academic outcomes for pupils. The school's culture is one of openness. This unites the whole school community in a bond of trust. Staff and pupils alike are proud to be part of your school. Pupils are welcomed into the uncluttered, bright corridors, one of which has been transformed into a 'writing tunnel' to celebrate a range of pupils' written work. Well-organised classrooms have a purposeful feel about them and the relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.

Governors have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are knowledgeable because you encourage them to ask difficult questions. They have been critical in setting and sharing the school's vision, which, as one parent governor stated, is 'alive in the values and actions of my child'. Parents are very positive about the school and supportive of its aims. However, as we agreed, the school's development plans lack measurable outcomes. This means that actions taken to improve the school cannot be effectively measured or success clearly evaluated by leaders, including governors.

Since the last inspection, the school has increased in size to accommodate three classes in each year group. This has significantly increased the school's capacity to provide training opportunities for staff. Training has been effective in helping teachers to promote pupils' independent learning skills. Teachers have also developed their questioning skills to ensure that pupils master core skills in language and mathematics. These areas have been successfully addressed since the last inspection. You have introduced an increasingly more

accurate assessment system which is helping teachers to plan pupils' next steps in their learning more effectively. However, we agreed that there is still a need to challenge the most able, and the most able disadvantaged pupils, to achieve the highest standards in writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school, which is backed by continually updated training for all staff. Pupils feel happy to approach members of staff with any concerns. The safeguarding lead is passionate about the pupils in her care and the safeguarding team bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles.

There is a wide range of support and early help available to pupils and parents. This approach ensures that families are supported to solve problems before they escalate. For example, comprehensive profiles are kept to support pupils with their behaviour so that they feel calm and focused on their work. This proactive way of safeguarding pupils' emotional well-being is a strength of the school.

### **Inspection findings**

We agreed a number of key issues that this inspection would focus on. The first of these was how effectively tasks match pupils' abilities and challenge the most able pupils in writing. Pupils' range of vocabulary and grasp of grammar on entry to the school are limited. It is clear from the work in pupils' books that they make consistently good progress. This is because the assessment of their progress informs teaching and learning. However, there is little evidence to suggest that pupils are achieving the highest standards. Your development plan has identified that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, could be challenged further in their writing. Senior leaders and governors share the ambition for these pupils and the English subject leader has a sensible plan in place to improve the subject. However, this plan lacks defined targets, so it is not possible to measure the effectiveness of actions towards meeting these.

The second key line of enquiry that we agreed upon was to look at how effectively staff development is improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have welcomed the opportunities they have had to develop their skills, both as teachers and as leaders. This has resulted in highly motivated staff who are enthusiastic about their areas of responsibility. Staff are active in supporting one another by reviewing each other's practice. This is adding greater consistency to teaching and learning within their year group teams. However, staff do not yet have opportunities to share good practice more consistently across the whole school. Leaders' monitoring records are clear and concise. They link the targets that staff have for their own development to the whole-school development priorities. This means that there is a strong sense of everyone contributing to the development of teaching and learning within the school. The staff responding to Ofsted's questionnaire were resoundingly positive about the support and development that they receive.

Finally, we considered how effectively leaders are tackling the absence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was due to the high absence rates of these pupils in 2016. The school has many strategies in place to support pupils' attendance and staff engage well with parents. The attendance leader monitors individual pupils and targets those with low attendance levels by providing individual support and rewards. Processes and procedures are well known by staff, who involve other professionals, such as education welfare support from the local authority, where appropriate. Leaders meet with parents and use communication books to inform them of what their child has done at school. When asked, pupils enthused about the rewards on offer for full attendance such as class parties if the whole class achieves 100% attendance that week. Leaders are aware that some pupils receive limited support for good attendance from their parents and this impacts negatively on their well-being and self-esteem. In order to ensure that pupils are fully supported, the school offers a range of services such as homework support to lessen the impact that persistent absence has pupils. The result is a clear improvement for targeted pupils. Leaders are becoming aware of the need to respond to the changing demographics of the school. They are starting to build their awareness of the cultures of families who are new to the area so that they can promote these pupils' attendance more effectively.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to develop the school's effectiveness include more-specific, measurable outcomes so that leaders and governors can assess the effectiveness of their actions to improve teaching and learning
- teachers set more ambitious tasks for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, in their written work to challenge them to reach the highest standards
- there are more opportunities available to staff to share good practice more consistently across the school and not just in their year group teams.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- I met with leaders to discuss safeguarding arrangements, school development and how the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, throughout the inspection about their

work and a range of areas of school life.

- I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing and topic books.
- I reviewed documentation, which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, staff appraisal documents, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school's development plan.
- I considered 10 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- I visited classes, along with you and your deputy, to observe pupils' learning.
- I met with governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management.
- I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I also looked at the school's logs of behaviour and bullying incidents.