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Ms Heather Gofton
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Dear Ms Gofton

Short inspection of The Drive Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and managers also maintain the environment to a high standard, making it safe, stimulating and attractive for pupils. A culture of 'only the best will do' prevails and a busy, happy buzz is perceptible throughout. Pupils relish responsibilities such as those of sports leader, house captain and school councillor, executing their roles confidently and diligently. They have strong, positive relationships with staff, describing teachers as 'really nice' and saying that 'children are too'. Pupils are confident that school rules are fair and applied consistently. The vast majority feel confident that bullying 'does not happen' and they feel assured that adults will listen to them if they have any worries. Several pupils told the inspector that their friends and peers behave well indoors and outside: as one pupil put it, 'I'm satisfied that behaviour's okay'. There are smiles aplenty at breaktimes and during lessons.

The previous inspection report required you to improve teaching. Leaders have done so, successfully. Along with your knowledgeable and decidedly enthusiastic subject leaders, you instil high expectations among the teaching staff. Together you make sure that all adults focus fully on the varying needs, capabilities and interests of pupils, as well as national curriculum requirements. Leaders at all levels monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly. They challenge and support staff to develop and improve their practice across subjects, continuously. Consequently, a skilful adult body motivates pupils effectively. Pupils' outcomes at the expected

standard in 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages 1 and 2 were above the national average. The work in pupils' books and your assessment information show similarly positive outcomes for pupils in each key stage and subject in 2017. Teaching, learning and assessment are strengths across year groups.

A significant proportion of children enter the school with skills that are below those expected for their age with regard to speech and language. Staff tackle these barriers head on, immersing children in a literacy-rich environment. Adults articulate the sounds that letters make correctly, model speech well and give children access to a wide range of stimulating reading and writing materials. As a result, the proportion of children in early years reaching a good level of development has risen steadily over time to match national averages. Leaders and governors agree, however, that the use of early years pupil premium funding and its effect, particularly on the most able disadvantaged children, needs further scrutiny and evaluation that is more thorough. Governors are mindful of the need to act swiftly to bring the school's website fully into line with their statutory duty of reporting on the use and impact of pupil premium funding.

You have also tackled the previous report's challenge to improve the effectiveness of all leaders, in a considered manner. You have worked closely with governors and the local authority to meet the future needs of the school in terms of succession planning. Governors have approved the restructuring of the senior team and this has enhanced leadership capacity. Governors and leaders recognise, however, that they need to be more responsive to parents' and carers' requests and queries. A small proportion of parents raised some concerns during this inspection about the approachability and availability of leaders. While inspection evidence found that the majority of parents have positive views of the school's work in this area, you have correctly identified cooperation and communication with parents for further development.

Since the previous inspection, overall attendance has fallen to just below national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was in the lowest 10% of all schools in 2016. You and governors swiftly took action to address underlying issues. You appointed a family liaison officer, and reviewed and revised your attendance policy and procedures. You worked closely with external partners to offer information, support and challenge for parents, impressing upon all the importance of good attendance and the effect that absence may have on pupils' welfare and achievement. Local authority partners fully backed your work in this area. Despite your collective efforts, however, attendance in 2017 remained below national averages for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors have rightly prioritised this as a key area for improvement moving forward.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Your leadership and management team is fully committed to keeping pupils safe and free from harm. You ensure that all staff, including governors and volunteers, receive regular training and frequent updates regarding child protection and safeguarding. Staff therefore are clear about their duties and understand what they need to do if they have any concerns. Adults report any issues promptly and appropriately.

You have recently installed an electronic entrance and exit system. Pupils explained that this has helped to make them feel protected. Managers also ensure that the school site is secure and pupils know that any visitors are required to wear a badge. Pupils are knowledgeable about online safety. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe by reporting any concerns they may have to school adults. Adults interact well with pupils at breaktimes. Their sensitive supervision, combined with separate, zoned areas for particular types of play such as football, together help to reduce risks and make play safe for pupils. There are designated areas for rest and quiet reflection, as well as 'buddy bus stops' and space to run, play and climb. In this way, the health and welfare and emotional and social needs of pupils are met effectively.

Parents and staff agree that the school serves a particularly close-knit community. Leaders work well with other agencies to secure help for families and pupils seeking support or who have vulnerabilities. Social care, healthcare services and the police combine their efforts to aid you in meeting the needs of families and pupils. This joint working plays an integral part in securing a safe environment for pupils. Positive partnership working will remain crucial in securing improvements in communication with parents and attendance for vulnerable groups.

Inspection findings

- Subject and middle leaders are an asset. They hold high expectations of themselves and are passionate and knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. They contribute fully to improvement planning and offer reports about progress against their action plans to governors. A commitment to ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils is tangible. Leaders track pupils' progress and attainment across each subject and in each key stage, evaluating pupils' outcomes against national curriculum requirements. Pupils' outcomes across key stages are good and improving in all subjects. Recently, higher proportions of pupils reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics than those seen nationally. School information and the work in pupils' books show that the proportions of pupils reaching a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 in key stage 2 exceeded national averages.

- Children in early years get off to a strong start due to good leadership and effective teaching and learning. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is improving each year, as leaders tweak the curriculum to suit the needs of individual cohorts. The early years leader tracks the progress of all children carefully. Staff intervene promptly to support children who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. Leaders were less confident in explaining the difference that the early years pupil premium funding is making, particularly for the most able disadvantaged children. Leaders' evaluation lacked rigour and at the time of the inspection, the school's website was non-compliant in this area. There is a collective understanding that all leaders have a part to play here. Leaders feel that a positive start for disadvantaged children across the early years curriculum prepares children well for their future achievement across subjects in key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils make good progress in mastering early reading skills. Teachers are careful to articulate sounds correctly when talking with children and pupils about the sounds that letters make. All teaching staff make good use of opportunities to discuss and introduce new vocabulary to pupils, inspiring a love of learning and language. Classrooms are book- and literacy rich. Parents have appreciated the phonics workshops that teachers deliver to support shared understanding of key early reading skills and children's development. The proportion of pupils that reach the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 exceeds national averages over time.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use their knowledge and expertise to plan sequences of learning that support pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In all key stages, teaching staff use questioning skilfully to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of subjects across the curriculum. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they particularly enjoy art, music, geography and history topics. Teaching staff encourage pupils to express their ideas and thinking clearly, by modelling and re-shaping pupils' explanations expertly, where appropriate. Consequently, the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in subjects across the curriculum is rising year on year.
- Pupils are well behaved and extremely polite. They have a well-developed understanding of the part they play in making others feel valued and welcome. The large majority of pupils say that they enjoy school and would recommend it to their peers. Leaders and staff develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Threading rich opportunities through the curriculum to explore acts of kindness, tolerance and respect does this. Consequently, pupils display positive attitudes to learning and respectful attitudes to others. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance, however, remains lower than national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- early years pupil premium funding is thoroughly evaluated for impact, particularly with regard to the most able children, and findings are fully reported on the website
- parents' queries and concerns are addressed by leaders through timely communication and positive partnership working
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves to match figures nationally.

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

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and subject and middle leaders. I conducted observations of teaching and learning across year groups alongside senior leaders and looked at pupils' work in books and during lessons. I examined a range of documentation, including policies, the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans, as well as behaviour and safeguarding information. I spoke with several parents on the playground and took account of seven free-text messages and 21 parent responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also paid attention to 18 survey responses from pupils. No staff responded to Ofsted's questionnaire; however, I spoke formally and informally with staff. I also took account of the school's own surveys of staff, parent and pupil views.