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Mr Paul Macfarlane
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Dear Mr Macfarlane

Short inspection of Dean Barwick School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 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 became permanent headteacher in September 2017, after serving as acting headteacher when the previous postholder retired in July 2016. Since you took over, you have changed the deployment of your staff to make more effective use of their skills. You have also reorganised the classes. All key stage 2 pupils now learn in one class and all the younger pupils in another. However, you have redesigned the room for these pupils so that those in key stage 1 can work separately from the early years children, enabling teachers to plan more easily for the needs of different age groups. This has contributed to the good and improving progress evident in key stage 1.

You have successfully addressed the area for improvement that inspectors identified in the last inspection report, which concerned writing, especially in key stage 1. You have made writing a regular item on the school's plan for development because you want to maintain a constant focus on this subject to secure sustained improvement. You have invested in new resources to support pupils' physical development at a younger age, such as pencil grips and new furniture of an appropriate size.

You deploy your teaching assistants to support pupils who need to catch up by working with them one to one or in small groups. You have also provided more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects. For example,

pupils write recounts and letters in their topic books. Pupils in key stage 1 now make good progress in their writing because of the strategies you have put in place. However, you acknowledge that, in Year 3 and Year 4, teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to practise sustained pieces of writing.

You are evaluative and analytical in your approach to planning for school improvement. You have been quick to identify other areas for improvement and to develop strategies to address them. You agree that your improvement plans, which are effective, would benefit from brief evaluations of the impact of your actions on pupils' achievement.

Staff are positive about the school and told me that there is a 'family feel' to it. They appreciate the training they receive, which contributes well to the continuing good standard of education that the school provides. They spoke to me knowledgeably about the range of activities that pupils enjoy as part of the school's curriculum, which aims to give pupils a breadth of learning experiences that will equip them for life. Leaders provide regular outdoor learning, lessons in religious education, after-school clubs and visits to mosques, temples and the local 'pupils' parliament'. All of these experiences effectively support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promote their understanding of fundamental British values.

Governors know the school well and understand its strengths and areas for development. They report that they challenge you well and hold you rigorously to account, which is reflected in the continuing good quality of education the school provides. However, they recognise that they need to keep a closer check on the school's website to ensure that it meets requirements.

You have a national leader of education who acts as your adviser on behalf of the local authority. She is clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement and provides effective support to the school. She has also worked with you as you have developed your role as headteacher. She provides increasingly light-touch support as you grow in experience and confidence.

Most parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very positive about the work of the school. They typically said that the staff are friendly and helpful and used phrases to describe pupils' learning such as 'fun and exciting'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are fully aware of procedures for reporting concerns, but there have been no safeguarding incidents to record. The record of checks on members of staff is thorough and meets requirements.

The safeguarding culture in the school is strong. Staff and governors have received appropriate training and have a good knowledge of how to recognise signs of different types of abuse, such as child sexual exploitation. You have reviewed access to the school building and have now created a single entrance, which is

suitably secure. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe online. They know about different forms of bullying and say that it never happens in school. They are confident that, if it should happen, staff would deal with it effectively.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection, which I shared with you at the start of the day. The first of these related to the area for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection and another to safeguarding. I have reported on these earlier in this letter.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned progress in English for pupils in key stage 1. You correctly identified that reading and writing needed improvement, based on your analysis of results for the small cohort of Year 2 pupils in 2016. By identifying pupils who need to catch up and by directing teaching assistants to give carefully targeted support, pupils' achievement has improved. Evidence from books, along with recent unvalidated assessment information for 2017, shows good progress in reading and writing among current pupils. For example, in writing, some pupils in the current Year 2 can already use correctly more advanced punctuation, such as apostrophes in words like 'I'm' and question marks. You realise, however, that teachers are sometimes inconsistent in providing suitably challenging work to the most able, which would allow them to work at greater depth.
- My next focus was on improving attendance among boys and reducing persistent absence among girls and pupils who do not have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also explored how you manage the attendance of pupils who are part of the 'flexi-schooling' arrangement, where their parents educate their children at home for part of the week. You have taken effective steps to address these matters, as attendance has improved. You make telephone calls to parents on the first day of a pupil's absence and publish regular updates in school newsletters to remind parents of the importance of good attendance. You do not authorise holidays in term time except in special circumstances. You also have formal discussions and sign a contract with parents who educate their children at home, so they are clear about the school's expectations of attendance. Pupils who receive 'flexi-schooling' attend regularly according to their individual timetables and these arrangements do not have a detrimental effect on overall attendance.
- Another focus was on the progress of pupils in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from pupils' books and from various sources of assessment information show that pupils make good progress. There was marked improvement in achievement at the end of Year 6 in the unvalidated assessment information for 2017 compared to 2016, although the number of pupils in the cohort was small. I saw a clear emphasis on questioning by adults that encourages pupils to use their reasoning skills in mathematics, in line with the school's improvement plan. However, you acknowledge that, while pupils make good progress in acquiring the knowledge and understanding they need in writing, staff do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils in Years 3 and 4

to apply their skills in more-sustained writing. You also accept that there is sometimes a lack of challenge in the work that teachers give to most-able pupils in writing and in mathematics.

- Finally, you recognise that the school's website does not meet requirements in providing information about pupils' performance, about some aspects of the report on the provision of special educational needs and about the school's use of the pupil premium and the physical education and sport premium. You have said that you will rectify matters as soon as possible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide work that more consistently challenges the most able pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
- teachers provide more consistent opportunities for sustained writing, especially in Year 3 and Year 4
- the school's website is compliant and remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement and minutes of meetings of the governing body. We discussed your procedures for recording incidents of bullying and misbehaviour and for recording concerns connected with the safeguarding of children. You reported that there had been no incidents since the last inspection. I held discussions with members of staff, governors and pupils. I had a discussion with the school's external adviser. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 25 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no other survey responses. I also reviewed the contents of the school's website.