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Mr Timothy Shenton
Headteacher
East Boldon Junior School
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Dear Mr Shenton

Short inspection of East Boldon Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, the school has been adversely affected by a number of changes in leadership. There have been three different headteachers in the last five years. Furthermore, some fractured relationships and staff absence has prevented you and your predecessors from being able to push forward with improvements in line with raised expectations nationally. Although pupils have continued to attain standards above the national average, they have not made the progress they should from their strong starting points on entry to the school. The areas the school was asked to improve in the last inspection have not been wholly addressed. Some teaching still does not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently. The role of middle leaders continues to need further development and nearly half of the parents who responded to Parent View still feel they do not receive good enough information on the children's learning and progress.

I found that parents have mixed views about the school. The parents I spoke to in person were positive and praised your efforts to engage with the community since your appointment. You have surveyed parental opinion and responded positively through the actions you have built into the school development plan. Parents have noticed their children's homework is more interesting and challenging and some feel they now learn more about their children's progress at reporting evenings. Everyone appreciates the weekly newsletter you have introduced. However, a number of

parents remain unhappy about the school's approach to dealing with bullying and, despite your extensive efforts, feel their concerns are unresolved. During the inspection, I found you have learned from their complaints and have done much recently to promote friendship, respect and kindness in school through your assemblies and during anti-bullying week.

Under your leadership the school is more settled. Since becoming headteacher you have made good teaching appointments and staff absence has declined. You have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses thoroughly and have detailed improvement planning in place. You have begun to focus your staff more on the progress of pupils and more ambitious targets have been set. Teachers are increasingly aware of the need to challenge the most able pupils and some additional teaching of English and mathematics has been introduced to accelerate their progress. Your current assessment information shows this is having a positive, but inconsistent, effect. For example, the proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 on track to attain the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 looks set to improve. However, progress rates remain weaker in some year groups and some disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they should. Both you and your deputy headteacher recognise that there is much to do if your more ambitious targets are to be achieved.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for by members of staff. You and other senior leaders act promptly when a concern is identified. You liaise carefully with other agencies to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to protect children at risk.

You have ensured that the culture in school is right and that members of staff are well trained and fully understanding of the duty upon them to protect children from harm. Leaders have ensured that most safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. However, there are aspects of safeguarding practice that need to be more rigorous. The safeguarding policy on the school website is out of date. More importantly, vetting checks made on adults who work in or visit the school need to be recorded fully. In addition, child protection records and records of behaviour incidents, including those involving bullying, need to be more thorough and complete.

Inspection findings

- Published data shows that pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above average. From these high starting points their progress in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics at East Boldon Junior School has been no better than average. Scrutiny of current pupils' books shows that they do not have enough opportunities to edit and improve their work or to apply their grasp of English to extended pieces of writing. New approaches to marking and to the teaching of handwriting are being trialled but are yet to be adopted as whole-school policies. As a result, the quality of pupils' presentation and expectations for improving their work are inconsistent. In mathematics, more positive subject

leadership is ensuring that pupils are now getting more frequent opportunities to apply their knowledge of mathematics to interesting and demanding problems.

- In the lessons we visited, we did not consistently see learning activities that challenged pupils. Although we saw some effective teaching and pupils who were fully engaged, we also saw some which lacked focus, with pupils unclear about what was expected of them. On some occasions, lessons and transitions between different episodes of teaching lacked pace, with teachers not doing enough to check what pupils had learned.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. During the inspection, pupils showed respect and courtesy for one another and for adults. Records show few incidents of poor behaviour have occurred this year. However, recording-keeping systems are not detailed and there is little thorough analysis that might help leaders to identify patterns and take actions to further improve behaviour. Levels of attendance are generally high and few pupils miss school regularly. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is worse than that of others and has fallen well below the national average.
- Governors are ambitious for the school but accept that the school could do better. They are, however, pleased to have established a stronger leadership team and point to a number of areas of the school's work that are improving. Governors are providing effective scrutiny of leaders' work to improve teaching and of pupils' progress. They have begun to make more visits to look at specific aspects of the school's work for themselves. Over time, however, governors have not done enough to check or audit the rigour of safeguarding practices.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality and pace of teaching improves so pupils' progress accelerates, especially that of the most able pupils
- pupils have more frequent and more challenging opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skill and understanding, particularly in English
- policies governing teaching and learning make expectations clear and are applied consistently
- safeguarding checks are more rigorous and thorough child protection records and records of behaviour and bullying incidents are kept through to a successful resolution.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, a representative of the local authority and six governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils to gather their views about the school. Together, we visited some lessons to look at the quality of teaching and learning. During lesson visits, I checked some pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' mathematics and English work with the deputy headteacher in order to evaluate the progress pupils had made over time. I looked at the 106 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), met with a group of parents and spoke to others on the telephone. I also considered the four responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, assessment records and other information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, I looked at the level of challenge for the most able pupils, the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and the quality of leadership, including the work of the governing body. I also looked closely at the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.