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Mrs Alison Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Johnson

Short inspection of Peases West Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders know the school well. You and the governing body recognised that a number of changes to staffing, including leadership, had resulted in fluctuating outcomes for pupils following the previous inspection. You have worked tirelessly, well-supported by the local authority, to stabilise staffing in the school and to reduce the variation in the achievement of pupils. As a result of precisely targeted additional support, the standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 in 2016 and 2017 increased. Careful use of additional funding has enabled disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. Exceptionally strong teaching in upper key stage 2 is accelerating pupils' progress. Consequently, in 2017, pupils in Year 6 achieved well in most subjects and were well prepared for their secondary education.

This is an inclusive school where staff work unrelentingly to support those pupils who may be vulnerable because they have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This passion and commitment rubs off on pupils, who highlighted to me the importance of treating everyone fairly and with respect. Most pupils behave very well. They show enthusiasm for their learning and take care with their work. You know that a few pupils display more challenging behaviour and have systems in place to provide considerable support for their social and emotional development.

You identified that pupils' attendance was weak and that too many pupils were persistently absent. Your work to improve this has been extensive, including home visits by the learning mentor and legal action in conjunction with the local authority. Frequent assemblies and communication with families have ensured that pupils know the

importance of coming to school regularly. This academic year, pupils' attendance and persistent absence has improved and is now broadly in line with the national averages.

Your work to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, who provides a strong role model to other staff. Staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that they value this leadership. Most recently, you have taken effective action to improve the teaching of spelling and the challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics. Consequently, more pupils are achieving well in these important areas. This academic year, you have appointed two new leaders to your team. You are providing support to develop their skills so that they can play a full role in leading teaching and learning.

Your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is honest and accurate. You were not surprised at all about the areas of school performance that I wanted to explore during this inspection. You know that you have more work to do to ensure that boys achieve as well as they can. Similarly, while you have secured some improvements to the provision in the early years, you recognise that children are not yet achieving as well as they should in writing and mathematics. These priorities feature in your plans for improvement.

Governors are committed to the school. They visit regularly and challenge the school to improve aspects of its performance. Governors' participation in the attendance working party has contributed to the reduction in pupils' absence. Governors receive detailed information from you about your work. Following recent changes to the governing body, you know there is more to do to ensure that all governors understand how pupils' progress is measured, so that they can set ambitious targets for the achievement of all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. You undertake detailed checks to ensure the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Staff receive appropriate training and you update this regularly through weekly briefings. As a result, staff are confident to raise any concerns about the safety of pupils. You act promptly to address these. Your meticulous records evidence your effective work with other agencies when pupils are at risk of harm.

The curriculum is comprehensive in supporting pupils to stay safe. You make use of other partners, such as the local police and the public health school nursing team, to help you to meet pupils' needs. Pupils told me they know how important it is to protect their personal information online following advice from a police officer.

The pupils I met with during the inspection indicated that they feel safe in school. They confirmed that, as indicated in the school's records, bullying is rare. Pupils appreciate your assemblies, which help them to develop key values such as honesty and respect. They are eager to take responsibility for helping others. Pupils were proud to tell me about their work, through the 'sports crew', organising games and physical activities for pupils, to help them to stay healthy. Parents who spoke with me during the inspection

noted that staff know individual pupils well. Parents indicated that they would have no hesitation in approaching the school should they have any worries or concerns.

Inspection findings

- Disappointed by the outcomes achieved by pupils in 2015, you increased the rigour with which you check on the performance of teachers. You now have higher expectations of the progress that pupils should make, taking account of the increased demands of the new national curriculum. Leaders recognised where, because of weaker teaching historically, there were gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. You have provided additional support and coaching to help pupils to catch up. As a result, in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 increased and was in line with the national average. You are not complacent about the gains that have been secured. Following a staffing change, you are checking closely on the progress being made by pupils in key stage 1 to ensure that standards are maintained this academic year.
- The impact of your work to improve the teaching of mathematics is clear within pupils' workbooks. Most pupils are now making stronger progress because teachers require them to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills by tackling complex problems. Books show that pupils regularly investigate patterns in numbers and work out the most efficient way to undertake calculations. You recognised that pupils were not fluent with mental calculations and introduced more frequent sessions for them to practise their basic skills such as multiplication tables. Pupils are now much more confident with number and, consequently, standards in mathematics are rising across the school. At the beginning of this academic year, you were concerned that not enough pupils were reaching the highest standard of attainment in mathematics. Following training and support, staff now routinely plan challenges to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding and require them to explain their reasoning. An increasing proportion of pupils are on track to exceed the expected standard for their age.
- Historically, pupils have not reached age-appropriate standards in spelling. Leaders introduced a new system to ensure that spelling is taught consistently across the school. The deputy headteacher now checks carefully on the progress being made by pupils and takes action where it is not rapid enough. As a result, the quality of writing in pupils' workbooks demonstrates that spelling is improving strongly throughout the school.
- Over time, you have ensured that the proportion of children reaching the expected standard for their age in the early years has increased. You have taken action over the past year to improve the curriculum that children access outdoors. This was evident during the inspection, where children effectively developed important learning skills such as exploring and investigating through the range of activities outdoors. Staff work hard to help children to develop the personal, social and emotional skills they need. Consequently, by the time they leave the early years, most children cooperate well with one another and are enthusiastic about learning. However, you recognise that the teaching of writing and mathematics needs to be improved so that more children reach the expected standard for their age by the end of the Reception

Year. You know that staff do not have high enough expectations of what children can do in these areas of learning. Teaching needs to be planned more precisely to build on what children can already do and to enable them to make faster progress in writing and mathematics.

- Although Peases West Primary is a small school, you maintain a strong focus on the progress of key groups of pupils. Detailed planning for the needs of disadvantaged pupils has resulted in strong gains in their achievement. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils attained well at the end of key stages 1 and 2, with most disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. You also review the impact of your work in this area carefully, so that you know what is working well and what you need to do differently.
- You know that the attainment of boys is variable. You have taken action to address this and, in some areas of the school, notably upper key stage 2, boys are making faster progress to catch up with their peers nationally. However, the school's own assessment information tells you that there is still inconsistency across key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 in the progress made by boys. While governors are aware of this priority, they have been focused predominantly on checking boys' attainment, rather than exploring the progress boys make from their different starting points. This has limited governors' ability to set the right expectations of the work of leaders. Governors recognise this and know they need to access training to help them to develop their skills and knowledge in this area.
- This academic year, you have appointed new leaders of mathematics and of the early years. They are benefiting from high-quality support from the deputy headteacher. For example, they are observing lessons and reviewing pupils' workbooks alongside her. It is too early to see the full impact of this support. You know that you need to maintain a focus on this, to ensure that all middle leaders share your high expectations of the quality of teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing and mathematics enables a higher proportion of children to make faster progress to catch up to the expected standard for their age by the end of the Reception Year
- boys' progress accelerates, so that a greater proportion reach and exceed the expected standard for their age across key stages 1 and 2
- support for new middle leaders continues so that they can play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils
- governors have the skills they need to accurately review the progress made by pupils from their different starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I conducted discussions with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and met with a group of pupils from key stage 2. I listened to pupils reading. I reviewed examples of pupils' work. You presented information detailing pupils' achievement, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the work of teachers. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils were checked. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the eight responses by pupils to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire and the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.