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Mr Anthony Watson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Watson

Short inspection of Hebburn Lakes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You continue to work hard to make Hebburn Lakes a happy school and your mantra that 'pupils learn best when they are happy' is reflected in all that you do. Your strong vision of bringing two schools successfully together into a 'state of the art' purpose-built school is testimony to your commitment and dedication to the pupils and community that you serve. You have created a haven for pupils which is calm and inclusive. The learning environment is vibrantly displayed, reflecting pupils' achievements and the many first-rate experiences you organise for them. The very recent addition of the well-resourced and inviting school library reinforces your continued drive to create the very best educational provision for all pupils.

Senior leaders share the same passion for the pupils in the school. Together, you make a strong team with complementary skills that ensure that all aspects of school life continue to improve. There is a strong emphasis from yourself and governors to invest heavily in succession planning, by developing and nurturing the next generation of leaders. Consequently, you have built an effective team around you, who value the encouragement and support you provide and welcome your investment in their training. This means that staff morale is high and staff absence is low. You have maintained the good quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.

Pupils' well-being is a high priority for you. Your dedicated welfare support officers

help you to ensure that strong and trusting relationships with parents are formed and sustained. They provide good help in times of need and offer a listening ear to signpost some of your most vulnerable families to external agencies for any additional support when required. Your 'mental health champion' provides the same strong level of emotional support for pupils and staff.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection was exemplary. Visits to classrooms demonstrated pupils' highly positive attitudes to their work. Pupils were happy to talk about their learning and keen to share their achievements. They respond well to your clear expectations for their behaviour and good manners and, for the most part, adhere to it. The large atrium within the school is orderly and calm, with pupils demonstrating high levels of respect for their wonderful school.

Important aspects of your work are the two bespoke behaviour support units you operate on behalf of the local authority. The pupils, who attend from across the local area, thrive here. The high levels of focused support enable them to overcome their previous unhappy experiences of school and to become successful, attentive and well-behaved learners. As a result, pupils achieve well and exclusions are rare.

You actively promote the values that are fundamental to pupils contributing successfully to life in modern Britain today. You use a range of agencies and workshops to support you in this important aspect of your provision. For example, older pupils accessed the parliamentary outreach programme, which supported pupils' growing understanding of, and respect for, the rule of law, democracy and debate.

Since the last inspection, you have put a raft of procedures in place to tackle the areas for improvement identified at that time. One of your most significant actions was to introduce a 'tracking system' for checking pupils' learning and progress. You use this system effectively to inform your self-evaluation, school improvement planning and your monitoring programme. While this has been useful to date, you have purchased a new system, which when launched later this term will aid you to tighten your analysis of pupils' achievements even further. We discussed how this will help you set sharper targets for your improvement planning and reflect more precisely the gains in pupils' achievement that you desire. Although your current plan identifies the right priorities for improvement, it is a cumbersome document. Governors agreed that having a sharper, more focused plan will help them in holding you and other leaders to account more effectively.

I raised with governors some omissions to the school's website. This is already in hand. A dedicated governor is in place, who has the responsibility for ensuring that all legal requirements for the school website are met.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are secure and fit for purpose. You complete detailed checks on anyone wishing to join your school. Regular training ensures that all staff understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils

safe in school and in their local communities.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that sometimes some pupils do not behave well, but that 'bullying doesn't happen'. Of the pupils spoken to, all demonstrated a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, particularly the types that can emerge when using the internet. They expressed great confidence that should any issue arise there is a trusted adult in whom they can confide and who would 'sort it straight away'. Although the overwhelming majority of parents endorsed this view, a small minority of parents felt that leaders did not respond well to their concerns. A review of your incident logs would indicate that you are timely in your responses, particularly the ready availability of your dedicated welfare support officers.

Inspection findings

- One of my foci for the inspection was to review the quality of teaching in reading. You had identified this as an area for improvement and had already taken action to improve pupils' progress in this subject. From September, you introduced a text-based approach to the teaching of English. This exposes pupils to high-quality texts from which they develop their comprehension and writing techniques. The early signs are that this is beginning to improve pupils' achievement in both reading and writing. More pupils are currently on track to reach the expected standard at the end of the year than was previously the case. While this is heartening, we agreed that there is still more to do to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils are able to be successful in achieving at the higher standard.
- I also reviewed guided reading sessions across key stage 2. In these sessions, teachers ask effective questions that make pupils consider the use of vocabulary and the author's techniques. Teachers and other adults work with specific groups during these sessions and this helps these pupils to think more deeply about what they are reading through their focused work with staff. For some pupils, however, particularly the most able and disadvantaged most able, when not working with an adult, their activities lack the challenge needed either to consolidate their learning or to be stretched to work at the higher standard.
- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved year on year and in 2017 were above the national average. Children get off to a great start with their phonics in the early years. All adults are enthusiastic and give children much encouragement to apply their phonic skills across all activities. Their expectations are high. As pupils move into key stage 1, adults share the same level of encouragement and enthusiasm, but the demands and expectations placed upon pupils, particularly the most able and the disadvantaged most able, do not build pupils' skills rapidly. For example, children in Reception class were writing their new sounds in a complete sentence. In other year groups, teachers' expectations were to write a word. You agreed that this is an area for improvement, as it will support pupils' achievement in reading and writing beyond the phonics screening check.
- A further focus for the inspection was to review how additional funding was spent

to improve reading outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You know your pupils well and track their progress carefully. You invest heavily in removing any barriers to learning that pupils may have and provide a wealth of educational experiences to enrich their learning. A raft of individual and small-group interventions are used to plug any gaps in learning that may exist. As a result, pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points. However, we agreed that too few disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have SEN reach the higher standard.

- My last focus was to check the actions you were taking to improve pupils' attendance. You have a range of procedures in place to do so. Your dedicated welfare support officers are rigorous in their monitoring and will go to pupils' homes to bring them to school if they are at all concerned. They offer high levels of support to some of your most vulnerable families, while continuously reinforcing the importance of good attendance. Consequently, attendance for pupils currently in the school is improving, particularly for those disadvantaged pupils who are regularly away from school. You are pleased with the improvements in attendance, which place you in line with the national average for primary schools. However, the variability of absence rates in the past means that this is an area you must continually monitor.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to improve the work of the school are succinct documents that are sharply focused on the gains in pupils' achievement desired and that milestones for improvement are clearly identified
- teachers plan activities that are sufficiently demanding to enable more pupils to reach the higher standards, particularly the most able and disadvantaged most able pupils.
- efforts to improve pupils' attendance are continued.

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

Diane Buckle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy and assistant headteacher, your welfare officers and special educational needs coordinator, to discuss aspects of the school's work. You shared your own written evaluations of the effectiveness of the

school and your improvement plans. We observed learning together in almost all year groups. We looked at your own assessment information and work in pupils' books.

I reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance and reports from your local authority's school improvement partner. I talked to pupils about their learning as we observed learning in classes and more formally when I heard a group of pupils read.

I talked to several parents at the end of the school day and held telephone discussions with some of them. I took account of the 23 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents.

I also met with six members of the governing body, including the chair and the school's local authority improvement partner.