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Mrs N Hill
Headteacher
Hetton Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hill

Short inspection of Hetton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 2019, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the leadership team are accurate in your evaluation of the school's performance. Since you were appointed in April 2017, you quickly identified areas that needed to be improved. For example, you have developed a systematic approach to teaching phonics and introduced a new assessment system.

Parents and carers talk passionately about the school. Responses to Ofsted's Parent View and conversations I had with parents, before school, were overwhelmingly positive. They value the smaller classes and the individual attention that their children receive. A number of parents have purposely chosen this school because of its caring and nurturing ethos. Parents praise the team spirit and sense of community that you provide. A view typical of many was, 'I champion this school, my child has thrived and I would recommend it to others.'

Pupils enjoy attending school and demonstrate a real sense of pride. They talk enthusiastically of the school motto, 'be the best that you can be', and are able to explain this, in terms of their learning and how they can help one another. Pupils appreciate the support that teachers give them in class when they find new concepts challenging. They spoke to me about recent changes in the curriculum such as how the exploration of text features in English supports their writing. They also enjoy exploring new ways of solving problems in mathematics.

Governors are supportive of the school. This is a period of transition for the governing body, as a number of long-serving governors have recently retired. You have undertaken a governor skills audit and this has given you an accurate evaluation of governors' strengths and areas for development. The recent appointment of a link governor for pupil premium will further sharpen accountability and governors' ability to hold senior leaders to account.

The previous inspection report challenged you to accelerate progress in phonics for children in the early years and Year 1. You took this recommendation seriously and undertook a comprehensive review of phonics teaching in Reception and key stage 1. Senior leaders visited other schools to observe good practice. All staff have received training for a consistency of approach. A new timetable ensures that support staff are available to teach smaller groups, with pupils grouped by their stage of learning. A new phonics tracking system has been introduced to measure progress and identify children at risk of not reaching the expected Year 1 phonics standard. The proportion of children achieving the expected Year 1 phonics standard was in line with the national average in 2018.

At the last inspection, inspectors also asked school leaders to provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. Following the inspection, leaders received support from the local authority to adopt a whole-school approach to teaching mathematics. When looking at a number of pupils' mathematics books across school, I saw clear evidence that most children are given regular opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving. The previous inspection report identified teachers' questioning as an area for improvement, to probe pupils' understanding to enable them to think more deeply about what they are learning. In the lessons that I observed, teachers' questioning effectively challenged children to use mathematical vocabulary accurately to explain their reasoning. For example, Year 5 pupils could convert mixed fractions, knowing the terms numerator and denominator and explain why a given statement was true or false.

Inspectors also recommended that targets set for improvement in the school development plan needed to be more specific and measurable, to enable leaders and governors to challenge the school more precisely. Your school development plan is based on an accurate analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, and correctly identifies areas for improvement. You and your senior leaders have identified clear objectives; however, actions are not consistently clear on how they will be achieved. In contrast, your recent work on the pupil premium strategy is focused with clear actions and success criteria, which will enable leaders and governors to hold you to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective and fit for purpose. Records of staff recruitment are detailed and of a high quality. Staff receive the training they need on child protection and safeguarding matters. The staff I spoke to were aware of procedures for recording concerns. You have close

working relationships with a number of outside agencies, including children's social care.

The pupils I met said that children are well behaved in school and incidents of bullying, although rare, are always dealt with efficiently and effectively. The curriculum supports children to stay safe. For example, children know why it is important not to share personal details online and why it is important to report concerns.

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are inquisitive by nature but always respectful. There have been no exclusions reported in recent years.

Inspection findings

- Historical data shows that the school attendance figure has remained below the national average for a number of years. I wanted to explore how effectively school leaders monitor attendance and tackle high rates of persistent absence. Attendance is tracked half termly and pupils causing concern are monitored weekly. You shared an example: four out of five pupils currently under close scrutiny for poor attendance have shown sustained improvement this term. Pupils benefit from a breakfast club before school to combat lateness. You have developed a comprehensive reward programme to encourage good attendance; for example, weekly attendance rewards in assembly and class prizes. Children also receive attendance wrist bands and certificates for 100% attendance each term. Your current attendance figure for this academic year is 95.2% which compares positively to the same period last year, which was 93.9%. However, pupils eligible for pupil premium funding remain disadvantaged by low attendance. You have correctly identified this as a barrier to progress for disadvantaged pupils in your pupil premium strategy. You plan to reward families with the most marked improvement.
- In 2018, attainment in reading was below the national average at key stage 1 and well below average at key stage 2. We discussed three pupils in Year 6 who narrowly missed reaching the expected standard in reading and the impact this has had on school results, with a small cohort of 20 pupils.
- Current pupils are making good progress in Year 1 due to the new consistent approach taken to teaching phonics. Detailed reading records show that children throughout school regularly read to an adult and children targeted for additional support are heard more frequently. Younger pupils whom I heard read were fluent and expressive. They were able to sound out unfamiliar words using their knowledge of phonics. Older pupils in key stage 2 could express a preference of author and genre. They could use inference and deduction skills and empathise with how a character feels.
- A new approach to the English curriculum is based around 'real books', where children enjoy sharing a class text. You have purchased a commercial scheme to target children at risk of not reaching the expected standard in Year 5 and Year 6. Children say they enjoy the challenge of online book quizzes to practise their

reading comprehension skills. You also have plans to implement a similar approach throughout school this term.

- In the Reception class, reading is promoted throughout the environment. Pupils' writing is displayed and celebrated. Reading books are readily available, based on the children's interests. Children learn stories and key vocabulary to support their independent writing.
- Progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2 in mathematics is average and attainment at key stage 2 is low. Your deputy headteacher, with responsibility for mathematics, has a firm grasp of the school's assessment information. She analyses data termly to identify pupils at risk of not reaching the expected standard. She shares this information with teachers regularly to review pupils' progress. Children are targeted for support and strategies agreed.
- Looking at pupils' books and observing in lessons demonstrated that pupils have regular opportunities to practise their basic skills and develop their mathematical fluency. The school has adopted a mastery approach to mathematics and there is a focus on developing problem-solving skills and reasoning. However, teachers do not consistently pitch learning tasks appropriately to ensure progress for all groups of pupils. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to address misconceptions. Therefore, not all pupils securely master the mathematics curriculum at each stage of learning.
- Finally, I focused on pupil premium funding and what leaders and governors do to support disadvantaged pupils to catch up. You track pupils' progress termly and keep a keen eye on the progress of the disadvantaged. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils made average progress in reading and mathematics, and slightly better progress in writing by the end of key stage 2. However, attainment for this group remained low.
- The new pupil premium strategy for 2018/19 gives a much sharper focus on spending. The plan provides a comprehensive overview of outcomes, identifies barriers to pupils' progress and explains how funding will be spent. You address key areas such as language and communication in Reception and key stage 1. New reading resources purchased in key stage 2 to support reading are helping current pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 to improve their reading stamina and develop comprehension skills. You recognise the impact of social and emotional factors and provide small nurture group support and counselling. You have also employed an additional teacher and teaching assistant to facilitate smaller classes and reduce the number of mixed-age classes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work hard to improve overall attendance and decrease high rates of persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- teachers use assessment and their knowledge of the pupils to pitch learning tasks appropriately, to ensure all groups are challenged in mathematics
- the school improvement plan is sharpened to include more-specific actions and

clearer impact measures

- governors systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources, including pupil premium, secures excellent outcomes for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Andy Jones
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, your deputy headteacher and senior leaders. We conducted a learning walk in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Together with your deputy headteacher, we completed a whole-school book scrutiny in mathematics. I met with a representative from the local authority and met six governors, including your chair of the governing body. I took into account school documentation, including monitoring records, self-evaluation and school improvement planning, assessment information, and policies and information posted on the school's website. I listened to six pupils read and spoke with pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2. I spoke with six parents and considered the 10 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.