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10 January 2019

Mr Stuart Joyce
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Joyce

Short inspection of Hunwick Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 January 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 and the governors have done an excellent job of steering the school through a challenging period over the last year. You have had to cope with several staff absences, including colleagues with leadership responsibilities, all of which were beyond your control. Your calm and thoughtful approach meant you managed the resources you had carefully to minimise the disruption to pupils' learning. Although a few parents feel the turnover in teachers was unsettling, most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are happy with the school and would recommend it to others. I found pupils to be settled, happy, confident and proud of their work. The results of key stage 2 national curriculum tests last summer confirmed your careful management had ensured that pupils had continued to perform well. Outcomes were in line with previous years. Pupils had made secure progress and attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics above those seen nationally.

You know your school well. Your systematic approach means that you and other leaders check the school's performance using a thoughtful range of strategies. Monitoring activities are carefully calendared across the year to ensure that the workload is spread evenly and shared across colleagues. You and the governors also ensure that the school is open to external scrutiny, to ensure no complacency. For example, earlier this term the school commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium, to check that you were doing everything you could for your disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, you have asked the local

authority to review your safeguarding arrangements early next term. These strategies mean you have a tight grip on the school's strengths and weaknesses, and, consequently, your plans for improvement are precisely written and lead to things changing for the better.

Since the last inspection, you have done much to refine and improve the quality of teaching, as Ofsted asked you to do. Policies governing teaching and learning are firmly embedded across the school and have a positive effect on pupils' progress. Teachers now have a good understanding of national curriculum expectations and use the national framework of objectives to plan age appropriate learning in each subject. The last inspection also asked you to develop the role of middle leaders more. Some changes in personnel since then mean some subject leaders are new to their role and you feel there is more to do to fully utilise their skills.

Most pupils I spoke to would give the school 10 out of 10. They told me that they feel safe and secure and that adults who work in the school are caring and considerate. They told me that they enjoy their work and find it to be interesting and challenging. My checks on their workbooks showed teachers have high expectations, as pupils take great care with their handwriting and presentation. I found the standard of writing to be strong across key stage 1 and to be improving quickly in key stage 2, as teachers challenge pupils to write at length and use vocabulary and grammar with increasing subtlety. Mathematics knowledge and skills are developed very well because the curriculum is well sequenced, balancing a focus on basic number with frequent opportunities for pupils to reason and solve problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that all adults who work in or visit the school are vetted thoroughly. Your staff are trained in safeguarding and are very aware of the different forms of abuse or neglect, including the risk of radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, they are vigilant and act quickly, in line with the school's policy, if they have any concerns about a child's welfare.

You and your safeguarding team meet regularly to check whether your actions to protect children are having a positive effect. You keep careful records that capture in full a chronology of events, reflecting your ongoing vigilance. You work closely with parents and, where appropriate, other safeguarding agencies to keep children safe.

Your curriculum also supports pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils are taught how to recognise risks and keep themselves safe. For example, all children are taught to swim and learn about the risks of the local river. Pupils are also taught how to stay safe when online by protecting their online identity.

Inspection findings

- On this inspection, I looked closely at the quality of teaching in the Reception class and key stage 1 because outcomes at the end of Reception and in the national phonics screening check dipped a little last year. I learned that the challenging staffing issues you faced may have contributed to this dip. I found the quality of teaching in the Reception class now to be strong and purposeful. Children are doing well, with many already working at the standard expected by the end of the early years. They demonstrate a good grasp of phonics because the teaching is of a high quality and meets their individual needs. They also show a good grasp of numbers up to 20. They could count up and count down and could add on and take away accurately. When playing together, they socialise well and make up games for themselves that involve reading and writing activities. Children are clearly being prepared well for Year 1.
- In key stage 1, pupils make strong progress in developing their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They quickly learn to form letters correctly and many progress quickly to writing in sentences and paragraphs. There are frequent opportunities for them to write at length. They gain confidence to solve problems in mathematics as they are introduced to lots of possible approaches. Good mathematics resources are used to help them grasp important concepts. Pupils are heard to read by an adult on most days and any pupil who is less secure in reading gets additional help. As a result, almost all pupils who fell below the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 reach the expected standard in Year 2.
- More widely across the school, reading skills are being developed well. Pupils' reading records show they read often, with many parents actively involved in reading with their children. In key stage 2, guided reading sessions take place twice a week. Pupils look at a wide variety of texts and are taught how to analyse and infer meaning. The school has a good system in place to assess pupils' progress in reading so that they get suitably challenging books. The most able readers, therefore, are stretched because their books are challenging.
- I also chose to look at the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. I found you track the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils carefully. Consequently, you and the governors know how well disadvantaged pupils are doing. Consequently, you know disadvantaged pupils are not attaining as well as their peers in some classes. The review of the school's use of the pupil premium was helpful in identifying some ways in which your additional funding could be used more sharply. For example, you have begun to check more rigorously whether the extra help in English and mathematics you provide for disadvantaged pupils is having a positive effect. The governors are looking closely at the performance of disadvantaged pupils when they visit the school. You have reworked your pupil premium strategy and given greater focus to improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. New approaches introduced this year are working well, and only a small proportion of pupils are now absent from school regularly. Pleasingly, the difference between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has narrowed considerably this year.

- Another line of enquiry for me was to check whether pupils receive a broad and balanced range of subjects so that their full entitlement to the national curriculum is met. I looked at this area because some subjects, such as art, music and design and technology, are not mentioned on the curriculum page of your website. I found that these subjects are taught and pupils' achievement in areas such as the arts is reflected strongly in their folders and in displays around the school. In art, for example, Year 6 pupils are learning to use a variety of different media to produce work influenced by Norman Cornish. In design and technology, pupils are learning to design and make Christmas stockings. However, in some subjects, such as history or geography, I found teachers set too many tasks that are focused on developing English skills and do not teach enough subject-specific content. Consequently, pupils' learning is not as deep as it should be.
- The governors provide good-quality oversight of the school. They have well-developed methods to hold you and other leaders to account. Like you, they know the school well and know where to challenge and when to support. They have played a helpful role in steering the school through the recent challenging period of turbulence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop teachers' subject knowledge further in the foundation subjects and check that their teaching of these areas focuses more on developing pupils' subject-specific knowledge.

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

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the literacy and mathematics leaders and the parent support adviser. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four other governors. Together, you and I visited lessons in each phase of the school, including Reception, to look at the quality of teaching and learning. During lesson visits, I scrutinised some pupils' books and talked to some pupils about their learning and progress. The literacy and mathematics leaders and I looked in detail at some pupils' books covering a broad range of subjects. I looked at the 21 responses to Parent View and considered the

11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 47 responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, assessment information and monitoring records. I also checked other documents available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the quality of teaching in Reception and key stage 1, how well the school teaches reading and the breadth of the curriculum. I also looked at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.