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Mrs Jane Davis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davis

Short inspection of Lanchester Endowed Parochial Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school sits at the heart of its community. You actively promote a strong Christian ethos, which leads to the values of respect, kindness and care, 'so everyone can flourish', being well embedded. Your success can be seen in a rapidly expanding school, which is regarded in the community and by parents and carers as a 'school of choice'. Pupils greatly enjoy their time in school, calling it the 'best school on earth' and saying, 'Teachers really look after us'. Pupils see it as a place where exciting things happen. Lessons and the many trips and varied opportunities for learning beyond the classroom raise pupils' aspirations successfully.

The previous inspection report's recommendations have been addressed successfully. Senior leaders and governors rose to the challenge of improving the quality of teaching and learning effectively. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' attainment in each key stage in reading, writing and mathematics has improved over time. The proportion of pupils leaving key stage 2 at the expected standard, over time, in reading, writing and in mathematics, is above the national average.

Leaders and governors are committed to equality and using additional funding to ensure that all pupils access good-quality opportunities for learning and personal and social development. Staff care deeply for all pupils, providing a safety net of emotional and practical support to more vulnerable pupils, and this helps them thrive. As a result, outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN)

and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 were higher than those with similar starting points nationally by the end of key stage 2. Your own information and work in books suggest that this will be at least the same or better for outcomes in 2018.

A strength of the school is the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in early years. Children enter with skills and knowledge broadly typical of those expected for their age and make strong progress so that they are wholly ready for the challenges of Year 1. They go on to do well in reading and writing particularly, where outcomes at the end of Year 2 are higher than those seen nationally for all groups of pupils. This is also the case in Year 1 in phonics, where all groups of pupils did especially well in 2018. However, at the end of early years and key stage 1, it is clear that boys do not always do as well as girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Discussions with leaders and teachers as well as the work in pupils' books corroborate this finding. Leaders recognise this and have identified several underlying issues correctly.

Leaders have embedded a science curriculum that clearly excites and engages learners. This is as a result of effective subject leaders who, with the support of an external expert, set out to improve science two years ago with obvious success. Pupils particularly enjoy practical tasks and learning outside the classroom, which they feel helps them to see meaning in their learning. Pupils make links between their experiences and their aspirations to become farmers, scientists and archaeologists. Pupils' science books show good progress from different starting points and a consistent approach to recording scientific investigations.

Aside from science, inspection evidence shows that links between subjects are not always as clear for pupils as they might be. Senior leaders and governors are aware of this and improvement plans are suitably focused upon further improvements across the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, governors and all staff ensure that the safety and welfare of the whole school community are paramount. All the appropriate checks for the recruitment of staff suitable to work with children are in place. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders maintain these records in a way that is secure but also allows for good information-sharing where appropriate. All staff have up-to-date training, know who the designated leads for safeguarding are and are clear about the procedures for making referrals when concerns arise.

Safeguarding leaders work closely and effectively with the local authority and other external agencies to ensure that all pupils are supported. The school pays particular attention to the care and well-being of children who are looked after, who have SEN and/or disabilities, or who require emotional support.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say, 'The teachers are always watching to help us' and, 'I am made to feel special'.

Pupils are taught to understand the risks in the world around them and how to manage them in a safe way. In particular, pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online. This is important for pupils because leaders and teachers promote the use of technology and social media to support learning. Older pupils spoke of the impact of watching 'Jigsaw', a Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) film, which had made them think very carefully about their own use of technology.

Attendance is above the national average for most groups of pupils and is improving for disadvantaged pupils. This is due to you and your staff forming good links with parents, who praise the school for the quality of communication with them. Parents feel confident that their children are safe and happy in school.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, senior and middle leaders have made improvements to systems of assessment. Observations in lessons and of pupils' books show that teachers consistently apply the school's assessment policy. Pupils say that this helps them improve their own work. The use of graded challenge tasks in mathematics, which pupils can self-select, allows pupils of all abilities to challenge themselves. One pupil, whose view typified that of others, said, 'It's challenging, but that's good because we try hard and we get better'. The impact of this work is shown in the attainment at the end of both key stages, which indicates a three-year rising trend in all subjects at the expected standard.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring that in key stage 2, progress rates for different groups of pupils from their starting points recovered from a slight dip in 2017. While pupils continued to attain better than other pupils nationally in 2017, progress from their different starting points, especially for disadvantaged pupils, was lower than in previous years. Leaders were proactive and developed an action plan in partnership with the local authority to address this. The impact of leaders' actions led to the recovery of progress rates in all subjects, and especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils in 2018.
- Leaders of English invested in high-quality reading resources to interest and engage young readers. They also ensured the teaching of specific reading skills, such as inference and deduction, through using shared class books and practical interactive comprehension lessons. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrated obvious enthusiasm for their class book, 'George's Secret Key to the Universe', and could show how it was helping them engage with their learning and make progress. As a result of changes made by leaders to the teaching of reading, all pupils made at least average progress from their different starting points.
- You and governors are effective in developing and recruiting high-quality leadership in the school. As a result, leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and their ability to identify areas where improvements could be made is good. Leaders have identified that some boys fail to achieve as well as girls by the end of early years and key stage 1. Plans are in place and leaders are taking action to diminish this difference. Although there has been some recent success, more time is needed to fully embed new strategies.

- Most children enter early years with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of those expected for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class has grown year on year. However, assessments show that a small proportion of boys entering early years have poorer self-confidence and verbal communication skills, which affects the rate at which they learn. To address this, learning is focused on creating opportunities for children to talk and communicate. The outdoor environment is well designed, with a wide range of resources to promote exploration and role-play. Children in Nursery, for example, became fascinated with pegging leaves onto strings, which, with skilful adult intervention, became an exploration of the language of colour, texture and feel.
- I observed teaching and learning in early years and Year 2 and spoke to leaders about recent improvements that are having a positive effect to diminish the difference between boys' and girls' achievement. Phonics is now taught for shorter periods and in flexible groups that are formed from careful analysis of more frequent assessment. Teachers carefully model correct letter sounds, ensuring that children are accurate when saying them. A Reception child told the teacher, 'I used to say "nuh" but now I say "nnn"!' Boys reading in Year 2 were successfully using their phonic knowledge to help them read. In 2018, boys outperformed girls in the Year 1 phonics check.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the differences between boys' and girls' achievement diminish in early years and key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics
- pupils are supported to make better links across different subjects in the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Colin Lofthouse
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you and the deputy headteacher of the school. I met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I met with the school business manager, who deals with recruitment and safeguarding procedures, and scrutinised the single

central record. I looked at a range of information about pupils' outcomes, attendance, behaviour and safety and scrutinised your self-evaluation and school improvement planning. I met with middle leaders representing early years, English, science, reading and phonics. You accompanied me on my visits to classrooms. I heard pupils read in Year 2 and looked at their reading records. I talked to a range of pupils about their learning and experiences at school. I looked at pupils' work, particularly for science, reading and writing. I looked at the responses to the online surveys completed by staff and pupils and I viewed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as direct communication received from parents.