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Mrs Alison Hawkins  
Headteacher  
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Northumberland  
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Dear Mrs Hawkins

### **Short inspection of Allendale Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 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 have successfully built on the strengths which were identified during the last inspection and diligently tackled any areas you have identified as needing improvement. You have been equally diligent to address other areas for improvement identified through your own self-evaluation. You and your team have maintained above-average standards at the end of key stage 2 despite a number of staffing changes and the need to rearrange the organisation of classes in the school.

You and your team have an in-depth knowledge of each pupil. You know their interests, strengths and where they need support to show their full potential. You make regular checks on pupils' progress to provide them with timely support and this enables them to make consistently good progress. This detailed information about pupils, allied with a keen understanding of how well different subjects are taught, enables you to pinpoint the areas your school needs to improve and develop further. A well-established system to check how well new developments have been introduced ensures that you have an accurate understanding of what still needs to be done to consolidate the gains that have already been made.

You have created a culture where staff are supported and encouraged to develop professionally. New middle leaders have benefited from investment in long-term training so that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to contribute to improvements in teaching and learning. For example, reading standards have improved because of actions taken by the middle leader responsible for English. You also enable middle leaders to work alongside colleagues in other schools to share good practice and develop their

knowledge and expertise further. This has supported middle leaders to ensure that assessments of pupils' work have become more accurate.

Governance is effective. Governors apply their professional expertise and knowledge well to make certain that they target support and provide challenge where and when it is needed. They are fully involved in setting the school's strategic priorities and consult with parents and carers to ensure that their work is relevant. Regular visits to see what is happening, discussions and consultation with staff and pupils, and close attention to pupils' academic performance result in a good knowledge of the school. Governors undertake regular training to ensure that they maintain effective challenge.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been successfully tackled. You were asked to enhance learning outdoors for the youngest pupils. The school grounds are now used extremely well to support all pupils' learning, including the youngest. The wildlife area, for example, provides pupils with the opportunity to study nature in detail. During my visit, we saw children in the early years fully absorbed in making homes for the mini-beasts they could observe. Children could fully understand the term 'habitat' because it was experienced first-hand.

At the last inspection, you were also asked to improve teaching by utilising those with the most expertise to help others. You have achieved this by enabling staff to work and plan together and see each other teach. Individuals have been supported to overcome any aspects of teaching they find difficult. This approach has enabled good teaching to be maintained during a number of temporary changes to staff. Your own commitment to teaching a class this term exemplifies the supportive approach you have created in school. You are a role model by providing opportunities to enable pupils to think more deeply about mathematics to encourage others to follow and learn from you.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Careful records are maintained to ensure that concerns are followed up where necessary. An annual audit by you and the safeguarding governor provides reassurance that procedures remain effective.

Staff training is up to date so they are aware of what to do when there are any concerns about a pupil. A safeguarding noticeboard in the staffroom acts as a timely reminder and exemplifies your desire to avoid complacency. Where necessary, you work with a range of agencies to support pupils and their families.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that behaviour in the playground is good the vast majority of the time. They say that when disputes occur, they are quickly resolved. Parents concur that pupils are safe and that pupils are well behaved. School records indicate that there are few incidents and that appropriate, prompt action is taken when they do occur. A minority of parents believe that the school does not deal effectively with bullying. This view is not supported by the evidence gathered during the inspection.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are keenly aware of online dangers and how these can be combatted. They are also aware of the dangers in the immediate environment. They know about poisonous plants which may be in the wildlife garden and which side of the road they should walk on where there are no pavements.

## **Inspection findings**

- I wanted to find out about the teaching of mathematics in the school because outcomes for this subject have not been as strong as in reading and writing. You and your team had already identified this as an area for further development. You have begun to develop teaching to enable pupils to think more deeply about their mathematics, to tackle more complex problems and to improve their basic calculation skills. As a result of work already undertaken, pupils continue to progress well and a greater proportion are working at a higher standard in Year 6. The work scrutiny I conducted jointly with the enthusiastic mathematics leader confirmed her view that there are now more opportunities to encourage pupils to think more deeply. They are challenged to explain and give reasons for their answers. However, this is not seen consistently in all year groups and sometimes the most able pupils complete lists of calculations which are not sufficiently demanding.
- An incentive to learn multiplication facts has enabled most pupils in key stage 2 to become secure in their knowledge. Pupils were keen to show me their Monty bear, the reward they gained for learning these facts.
- The teaching of mathematics in the early years is effective and enables children to progress well from their starting points. Carefully planned activities are supplemented with a range of relevant resources and equipment to support children's understanding. Questioning is used well to enable children to make links in their learning and extend their thinking.
- Another area I was interested to explore was how well pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. You and your team have identified the need to strengthen this aspect of the curriculum. The end-of-year concert which pupils were enthusiastically rehearsing during my visit was based on the values of tolerance, democracy and fairness, and the pupils I spoke to exemplified these values. You have revamped the way pupils learn about different faiths by introducing a range of visits to places of worship, for example. However, these recent changes mean that pupils' understanding of the diversity of life in modern Britain is not yet fully developed.
- Standards in science and in a range of subjects at the end of the early years are high and I wanted to see if this was the case in other subjects. Our scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed their engagement and interest through a rich range of planned activities. This also includes opportunities to learn first-hand on visits and from visitors in a wide range of subjects. Pupils present and complete their work with care. Art work is finished to a high standard. Progress is strong. However, skills and knowledge were not always built up in a logical sequence in each subject. This hampers more rapid progress. In addition, on occasion the most able pupils were not stretched enough.
- The final area I wanted to explore was how you use pupil premium funding to support the small number of eligible pupils. I found that your in-depth knowledge of pupils

means that they receive the right support to enable them to make good progress. Governors track their progress carefully and ensure that funds are used appropriately.

- Although not a focus for this inspection, I noted the wide range of sporting opportunities you and your team provide for pupils. Your determination to encourage pupils to participate means that they regularly experience competitions and tournaments as well as the chance to join one of the many lunchtime and after-school clubs. Your passion for ensuring that pupils remain at the heart of what you do is also notable. It is exemplified in the many ways pupils contribute to school developments. During my visit, a group of pupils had taken the initiative to design a programme for the end-of-term concert. The playground has been enhanced because of prompting by pupils, and they are enthusiastic school councillors and eco warriors.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent developments to enable pupils to think more deeply in mathematics are implemented consistently so that all pupils, including the most able, receive the right level of challenge to accelerate their progress further
- plans to develop the curriculum are implemented so that:
  - skills and knowledge build up sequentially in each subject
  - there are more opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the diversity of life in modern Britain.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Waugh  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and a group of staff. You and I visited all classes and scrutinised work in a range of subjects. I met with a group of five governors and spoke with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils about their views of the school, including their views of pupils' behaviour. Some pupils read their work to me. I also conducted a work scrutiny with the mathematics leader and held a discussion with the leader for early years. I considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to some parents at the end of the school day. Various documents were considered, relating to safeguarding, teaching and governance. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and

tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments and I looked at the school's website.