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Miss Emily Hodgeon  
Headteacher  
Bowesfield Primary School  
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Dear Miss Hodgeon

### **Short inspection of Bowesfield Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have successfully embedded an inclusive, positive ethos across the school. Your polite, sociable pupils feel safe and valued in the caring hands of your staff. They say that teachers are 'very kind'. Parents and carers agree with their children's views, finding staff 'friendly, helpful... and proactive'. Parents also appreciate your ready availability and teachers' prompt responses to any concerns they raise: 'the headteacher is ever present' and 'staff always listen to concerns and offer reassurance... and support'. Mutual respect is evident throughout this happy school community as pupils and staff genuinely delight in each other's company.

The previous inspection challenged you to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management. There has been significant shift and change in leadership since then. Seven governors, including the chair of the governing body, are relatively new to their roles. The deputy headteacher, pastoral support adviser and business manager have also been appointed since the previous inspection. Despite this turbulence, leaders' actions have led to several positive successes. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has significantly reduced and pupils' overall attendance has improved to match the national average. Consequently, the very large majority of pupils now benefit from good attendance. Appropriately, your work to ensure that all parents and pupils understand the importance of good attendance and its effect on pupils' success in later life is continuing.

The previous report also urged you to enable subject and phase leaders to monitor the quality of teaching. Recommendations tasked leaders to use assessment information skilfully to drive improvement in their areas of responsibility. However, not all leaders currently monitor teaching and learning closely or effectively. While some leaders have a good understanding of their role, actively improve teaching and learning and can identify how well groups of pupils are doing over time, others cannot. For example, leaders do not gather assessment information about pupils' progress in science. They do not get into classes to see the quality of teaching and learning in science. Leaders cannot, therefore, confidently explain how well pupils are doing in science from their different starting points.

You were also requested to improve pupils' progress and attainment in reading. Reading is a key area for improvement in your development plan. Together with other leaders, including local authority partners, you have worked diligently to raise the profile of reading. You invested in new reading books and materials. A structured programme for the teaching and learning of phonics was introduced in January 2018. A newly stocked library area is now ready and waiting, though pupils have yet to access it. Leaders' actions have led to some early signs of success. Most pupils who made their views known during this inspection said that they enjoyed reading and Year 1 pupils' phonics outcomes show signs of improvement this year. In 2017, in key stage 2, pupils' attainment in reading improved considerably from their 2016 outcomes to just below the national average.

Despite these positive indicators, you have correctly identified that some issues in terms of reading remain, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in reading is not consistent or sufficiently rigorous. Currently, not all staff are expert in their delivery or understanding of phonics and they are still grappling with the requirements of the new phonics programme. Not all pupils who need additional support to catch up read regularly with adults in school. Agreement has not yet been reached on what exactly the national curriculum prerequisite to 'read widely' should look like in this school. Precisely when and in what way pupils should be taught specific reading skills of decoding and comprehension are not wholly decided upon. At present, such issues are inhibiting the pace of pupils' progress in reading.

The early years leader is working in active partnership with the local authority to develop early years practices across local schools. This is leading to increased skills and expertise in early years leadership. Consequently, leaders have correctly identified that some Reception children need greater challenge in their learning and work, specifically in the basic skills of reading, writing and number. Leaders also see that children need increased, consistent opportunities to read with adults in school. With these points in mind, the early years leader has restructured provision across the key stage to offer distinct, separate learning opportunities for Nursery and Reception children. It is too soon to tell whether leaders' changes and intentions will result in a greater proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave Reception classes.

The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in the early years

has been below national averages over time. This means that not all children are well prepared for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum. You identified some aspects of children's speech, communication and language as barriers to children's progress. You have tasked members of staff with specific responsibility for leading on related areas of the school's work, such as phonics and English as an additional language. Also, you rightly insist that teachers take children's needs into account when planning tasks and learning. However, leaders' assessment information in this area is imprecise. Not all leaders have a thorough knowledge of whether children who speak English as an additional language are new to English, have some degree of proficiency or are fluent in English. This means that teachers' planning for this large group of children lacks accuracy. At present, children's progress is hampered in this regard.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You take the care and protection of pupils extremely seriously. Over the last two years, you have ensured that pupils' safety was prioritised during the extensive building works that took place to expand the school. You worked closely with architects to make sure that each new space took account of pupils' and parents' needs in terms of privacy, care and protection. Strict processes were put in place to manage the additional workforce on site. Your vigilance, keen eye for detail and determination to safeguard pupils means that the completed works take greater account of pupils', parents' and staff's needs.

Governors have worked with you to make sure that staff have regular, up-to-date child protection training. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at staff and governors' meetings. Several leaders are trained in safer recruitment, which means that any new appointments are subject to a rigorous process. Induction for new members of staff is thorough and all staff know how and to whom they must report any concerns they have. Such systems and measures ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that pupils are kept safe from harm. Any risks to staff and vulnerable pupils and families are minimised.

A very small proportion of staff had an element of difficulty relating to the government's 'Prevent' duty information to their day-to-day role. While staff understood the key messages presented in the documentation, one or two adults had some trouble defining precisely what this might mean in practice.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are keenly committed to serving the diverse needs of your pupils. You are keen to secure improvements and make no excuses for pupils' lower than average attainment in some subjects, agreeing fully with the priorities identified during this inspection. Quite rightly, however, you take very seriously the additional challenges faced by many families in terms of disadvantage and vulnerability. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is more than double the national average. Your recently appointed pastoral support adviser works well in partnership with you, parents and other leaders to meet pupils'

personal, social and emotional needs effectively. This is evident in the manner in which happy, well-mannered pupils conduct themselves in and around the school and is a strength of your work with pupils and their families.

- Staff are grateful for the range of professional development opportunities that you are affording them to develop and hone their skills of leadership and management. Currently, though, not all subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility effectively. Not all leaders focus meticulously on the correct priorities. In reading and science, specifically, improvement plans lack the detail and measurability needed to secure better outcomes for pupils or to improve the quality of teaching. You recognise that some leaders need further support and challenge to manage their areas of responsibility consistently well.
- Some recent signs of improvement are emerging in reading. Pupils' outcomes in Year 1 phonics and reading in key stage 2 have improved lately. Nonetheless, the overall quality of the teaching and learning of reading is too variable. In key stage 1, in 2017, pupils' attainment of the expected standard in reading was well below the national average and that of the lowest 10% of all schools. Less than half of the pupils in Year 1 in 2017 reached the expected standard in phonics. Pupils' reading records and discussions with staff and pupils show that few pupils read regularly or widely with adults in school over time. Teaching and learning practices in the early years and key stage 1 are especially inconsistent. A strategic, shared understanding of the approach to reading is not yet embedded across the school.
- Early years staff are warm and welcoming. Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey said that their children 'are enthusiastic' about attending and 'come home with smiles on their faces'. At present, leadership in the early years is developing apace because of your commitment to providing good-quality professional development opportunities for staff. Nursery children make good progress from their below-typical starting points across the early years curriculum. Nonetheless, over time, fewer than half of the children in Reception classes have reached a good level of development. This means that not all children are well prepared for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum. Reception children have too little challenge in their tasks and learning across the provision in reading, writing and number. Children's proficiency skills in English are not thoroughly evaluated to ensure that planning meets their needs and builds effectively on the progress made in the Nursery class. Reception children, therefore, make inconsistent progress in developing their basic skills.
- Pupils in key stage 1 and 2 increasingly investigate essential aspects of scientific knowledge, concepts, processes and methods. Several pupils told me that they enjoy science, and pupils' books show that they are beginning to record their predictions and findings in scientific enquiries. Nevertheless, pupils' outcomes, over time, are well below national averages in each key stage. In 2017, only 50% of key stage 2 pupils reached the expected standard in science. This means that too few are well prepared for the demands of the key stage 3 science curriculum over time.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all subject leaders monitor teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility meticulously to raise pupils' outcomes, including in reading and science
- leaders embed a whole-school, strategic approach to the teaching and learning of reading that is based on best practice and allows pupils to read widely and often
- leaders capture, and use effectively in planning, accurate information about pupils' proficiency in English, specifically where English is an additional language
- children in Reception are given greater challenge in their tasks and learning, especially in reading, writing and number
- all staff have a deep understanding of their role in relation to the government's 'Prevent' duty.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior and subject leaders, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. You and I jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across key stages. I scrutinised work in pupils' books, listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils from each key stage. No pupils responded to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. I reviewed school documentation and information, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness document, policies, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I took account of six free-text comments made by parents and the school's own survey of parents' views. I spoke with staff during the inspection and also considered the views of seven members of staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire.