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Mrs Nicola Watson  
Headteacher  
Barley Mow Primary School  
Barley Mow  
Chester-le-street  
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Dear Mrs Watson

### **Short inspection of Barley Mow Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 Barley Mow school was judged to be good in November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection you have provided strong, effective leadership which has led to the development of the school. You know the school extremely well, have high expectations of yourself and your staff and are determined to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil. You are supported well by your senior leadership team and governors, who are ambitious to provide the best possible education for pupils. You have been proactive in requesting support from the local authority to improve the outcomes for pupils in school. This support has been very effective.

You have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan identify the correct priorities for improving the school further and raising pupils' achievements.

Leaders, staff and governors have largely dealt with the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. Your participation in a cross curricular improvement group has provided high-quality professional development for senior and middle leaders. This joint professional development, across 10 schools, has had a positive impact on middle leaders' grasp of their subjects. You and your deputy headteacher provide whole-school, group and individually tailored support for staff. High-quality professional development has also had a positive impact on current outcomes in writing. Pupils' books in English, history, geography and science show that pupils know how to improve their work, and this has led to higher standards in English across the curriculum. Pupils report that they find this system useful and they know it

improves their work. One pupil stated, 'It is easy to use, and it really works!' Other pupils agreed.

In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, an increasing number of pupils achieved expected and higher scores in reading and writing. A number of disadvantaged pupils achieved higher scores in reading and writing, but fewer pupils achieved the expected level. At key stage 2 in 2018, grammar, punctuation and spelling attainment in school improved rapidly. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved well above the national average, with 90% of pupils achieving the expected level and 28% of pupils achieving a higher score. This demonstrates how leaders are striving to improve English outcomes for all pupils. Leaders have identified, and are working hard to ensure, that challenge for the most able and disadvantaged pupils is a priority. Provision in school and work in pupils' books demonstrate that this priority is being addressed by the school.

Leaders and governors have identified that mathematics is a priority area this academic year. At key stage 2 in 2016 and 2017, progress in mathematics, for all pupils, was well above the national average, attainment was below the national average at expected and at higher standards. In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, there was a decline in the progress made by pupils in mathematics, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 remained below the national average at the expected standard, though more pupils achieved the higher standard. Leaders have correctly identified that improving attainment at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics, at both the expected and the higher standard, is a priority, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have maintained the previously identified strengths. In the last inspection, pupils' behaviour was highlighted as a strength. This strength has been enhanced. The headteacher and governors have reviewed behaviour management and this has resulted in consistent high standards of behaviour across school. School records demonstrate the impact these actions have had. There are now very few instances of poor behaviour and no fixed-term or permanent exclusions. All pupils throughout the school, including the children in early years, enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well. Pupils are confident and independent learners. They listen carefully to each other and adults. The school is working towards becoming a Rights Respecting School. Pupils and staff develop classroom charters; this partnership supports excellent relationships that enhance learning.

During our visits to classrooms, pupils engaged well with their learning and worked hard. This is because teachers plan work that matches pupils' needs and interests well. Pupils could confidently explain to me what they were learning and what they were aiming to improve. Teachers work hard to support pupils to improve their work, in line with the school's policy, that supports continuous improvement. Pupils told me one of the best things about school is the staff and that they enjoy the range of subjects they study.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governing body afford a high priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out appropriately stringent checks on staff, governors and volunteers to make sure that they are suitable to work with pupils. You ensure that all staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Bite-size training is undertaken by all staff to brief them on emerging issues. Staff, therefore, know how to execute their duties in protecting pupils and keeping them safe.

Leaders have ensured that provision relating to pupils' emotional well-being is well established. You recently conducted a vulnerability audit to ensure that every pupil has the support they need. Leaders and governors have made sure that the school is well resourced with knowledgeable and caring staff who provide support for vulnerable pupils. The safeguarding governor meets with the headteacher regularly and is knowledgeable about her role. Leaders and staff work effectively with parents, carers and other agencies and take prompt action if you have concerns about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders are proactive about attendance; they do all they can to ensure that pupils attend school on a regular basis. Attendance improved in 2017/2018 to 96%, which is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils who frequently miss school, including disadvantaged pupils, has declined, but remains slightly above the national average. Leaders recognise this and have reviewed their robust system to improve attendance further.

## **Inspection findings**

- You and your staff have created a vibrant learning environment that supports and engages pupils' interests. Working walls help pupils develop their English and mathematical skills. Each classroom and group room have age-related resources to enhance pupils' learning. Staff use these resources well to support learning. For example, Year 6 pupils were very effectively supported by a teaching assistant, who insisted they search for a describing word to improve their writing. Pupils achieved this and, in doing so, demonstrated how they independently improve their writing. This vibrant learning environment is held in high regard; it receives many visitors from other schools.
- We visited Year 6, where pupils were reviewing the importance of using written methods when using large numbers, to ensure accuracy. Pupils demonstrated they knew the importance of this. They explained, using the correct mathematical vocabulary, that an inverse operation is needed to work out what a missing number is. Excellent relationships were evident and pupils listened carefully to each other and their teacher. We agreed that this session lacked challenge for the most able pupils.
- During short visits to classrooms to evaluate provision for disadvantaged pupils, we observed a mathematics intervention for Year 2 pupils. Pupils were provided with a

range of resources to support subtraction skills. They demonstrated how to use number lines to subtract numbers to 20, accurately. Pupils worked independently; they persevered to ensure that they got the correct answer. In Reception class, we observed a group of children identifying the initial sound in a word. Pupils were provided with practical resources to demonstrate their knowledge. A child picked up a tomato, stated the initial sound was 't', and he then crossed an imaginary river and wrote the letter 't' on a whiteboard. He was very proud of his achievement and asked the headteacher to look at it. Children were enjoying their learning, they shared resources, were confident and settled in their new class.

- Your middle leaders for English, history and science shared their views that they have been provided with high-quality professional development. They know the strengths of their subjects and areas of development. Middle leaders have worked hard to ensure that high standards of English are evident in pupils' books. This approach has had a positive impact on current outcomes in writing. The success of this approach was evident in a Year 6 pupil's piece of writing, based on Victorian Britain. This piece of work demonstrated how the pupil had improved the vocabulary and punctuation in their work. Further pieces of work demonstrated that these improvements in vocabulary and punctuation were maintained and the pupil was making at least good progress. Staff shared their opinions that the school approach to professional development has improved staff confidence and helped create an open and honest dialogue in school. Staff will ask for help and know it will be provided. Staff survey results reflect how valued professional development is.
- Middle leaders for English and mathematics work in teams and support each other. This team approach to the leadership of mathematics has led to positive changes in provision. Last academic year, your deputy headteacher trialled a new approach to the teaching of mathematics in her class. Basic skills, for example addition, were taught for a longer period of time. The leader ensured that addition was revisited during mental mathematics sessions across the year. The effect of this approach was evident in the progress and attainment made in this year group by all pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged. This approach to teaching mathematics has now been implemented across school. In addition to this, your deputy headteacher has provided focused individual support for teachers in mathematics. This support is time limited, evaluated and has improved learning in mathematics.
- We analysed, together, pupils' current outcomes in school. These demonstrate that attainment and progress in reading and writing are stronger than in mathematics. Mathematics outcomes for pupils in school are variable across year groups. We agreed that mathematics attainment needs to improve, to ensure that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve the expected level and greater depth by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils feel safe in school; they report that if they are worried about something an adult will listen to them and try to help them sort out their problem. They shared the consistent approach used by all adults in school to solve disagreements, stating, 'Adults always listen to both sides of the story: they are fair!' Pupils have a good awareness of internet safety and know it is important not to speak to people they do not know online. They report that they enjoy their learning and the wide range of subjects they study.

- Parents are positive and proud of their children's school. Parents state it is a warm, friendly, welcoming environment. They feel that staff work extremely hard and that the school keeps them well informed of their children's progress. They appreciate the feedback system used in school to help their children improve their work. Communication between home and school is described as excellent. The breakfast club is appreciated by parents. Parents value the educational visits and visitors to school that further develop their children's learning, with one example being a Tudor visitor who reinforced pupils' knowledge of what it was like to live in Tudor times.
- Governors have benefited from a range of development opportunities to support them in their roles. They are knowledgeable about school improvement priorities and challenge the headteacher and leadership team. Their collective aim is to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment in mathematics improves by the end of key stage 2 at both the expected and the higher standard and becomes closer to national expectations, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged
- they embed the new approach to teaching mathematics
- they regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of this approach on the attainment of mathematics at both the expected and the higher standard, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged 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 Gateshead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Gowland  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I discussed the work of the school with leaders. I observed a mathematics lesson and conducted short visits to classrooms across school. I held meetings with leaders for English, mathematics, history, science and pupil premium. I observed and spoke with pupils at playtime. I met with a group of pupils. I met with the school's improvement partner. I met with three governors, including the vice chair of the governing body and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding. I scrutinised a range of documentation relating to governors, teaching, safeguarding,

bullying, exclusions of pupils, referrals, pupils with care plans and attendance. I analysed pupils' current progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. I completed a joint work scrutiny with the headteacher. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day, considered 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and information received during the inspection. I considered 16 responses to the staff survey.