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Mr Miles Wallis-Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wallis-Clarke

Short inspection of Hotspur Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leadership is the responsibility of all your staff. You have maintained and enhanced a skilful and highly effective school team. There is a tangible drive and sense of urgency to provide high-quality learning opportunities which allow pupils to thrive. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are accelerating the rates of progress of current pupils across the school.

Teachers routinely establish high expectations. They accept no excuses for failure and they work collaboratively to address issues that arise. You, governors and other school leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching, undertaking monitoring of teaching in lessons and analysing work in pupils' books. You have ensured that systems to track pupils' achievement allow teachers to plan extra support and help for pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. You acknowledge that these systems require further development as currently they do not allow you, leaders, governors and teachers to have accurate information on the rates of progress made by individuals and groups of pupils in their learning across the school.

You acknowledge that differences remain in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. You have well-thought-through plans to continue to support disadvantaged pupils across the school in a variety of ways, not always simply academically. These innovative strategies, led by the deputy headteacher and learning and equalities champion, are having a demonstrably positive impact. Differences in the rates of progress made in learning by disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged classmates have been significantly diminished for this academic year, but in most year groups, differences in standards of attainment remain.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations of staff and this is seen in their excellent attitudes to learning in lessons. They work hard and are always keen to produce their very best work. Pupils develop excellent citizenship skills, being keen to take on responsibilities through roles such as being a member of the school council, taking on a monitor's role in each class or as part of the eco-council. Pupils take pride in the well-ordered and extremely tidy school environment, benefiting from high-quality displays in classes and shared area. Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is exemplary, inspired by Hotspur's core values such as being industrious, courageous, honest or respectful. You have worked hard to eradicate low rates of attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Rates of attendance for this year to date are much improved compared with the same time period last year, but still remain below those found nationally.

You have ensured that pupils benefit from a curriculum that fires their interest through visitors to school, such as guests from Indonesia to demonstrate and play musical instruments, or visits to important sites across the region linked to their topic work. Your work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Opportunities for pupils to participate in a myriad of cultural, musical, theatrical and sporting opportunities are the norm. High-quality display work is found in every class, the most recent inspired by the whole-school visit to the Great North Museum. Classes chose either the Roman deity Mithras or the fossilised remains of an ichthyosaur to promote creative writing, art or model making.

The whole school team has diligently addressed issues raised at the last inspection. Reading books are changed at least weekly or more often if requested and improved provision in early years has ensured that children are making rapid progress in learning. Systems to provide supportive feedback from teachers are embedded and valued by pupils, and differences in outcomes for pupils by gender are eradicated.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and all leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff. An integral part of the school's exemplary approach to safeguarding and pupils' well-being is the inspirational work of the skilled learning and equalities champion. Under his watchful eye, no stone is left unturned to ensure that all pupils are safe and have opportunities to thrive. Pupils in school report feeling very safe at all times, and value the opportunities they have to explore the creative and performing arts, and sports. They have full trust in their teachers and teaching assistants who look after them, assuring me that any minor disputes are immediately and effectively dealt with by all adults.

The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety, including keeping themselves safe online. Pupils know the dangers of social media and never to post personal details online. Policies, procedures and records are of extremely high quality. Detailed records are maintained, including those for any minor behavioural incidents or extremely rare incidents of poor behaviour. Staff training is thorough and up to date, including training to ensure that pupils are kept safe from the risks of extremism and online dangers, and registers of staff training are completed diligently. Staff have access to well-written policies and guidance and have a very secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that the school continues to work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils are safe and well cared for. The strong relationships in school and high levels of trust between adults and pupils ensure that pupils' conduct in lessons and around school is exemplary. Pupils are polite, caring, considerate and friendly to each other and to visitors. Safeguarding is highly effective and the school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is excellent. A vibrant curriculum, bolstered and enhanced by cultural, artistic and sporting opportunities, and typified by pupils' love of and undoubted talent in singing, promotes high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children in early years are getting off to a fast start in their learning. Children start Hotspur with varying skills and abilities, but the vast majority are below those expected for their age. New systems and approaches to teaching, a reorganised curriculum based on supporting children's auditory and visual discrimination, and a reorganisation of the indoor and outdoor learning environment have been successfully led by the skilled early years leader. These changes are clearly accelerating the pace of learning for all children. In summer 2017, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development was just above that found nationally and has risen for a fourth consecutive year. Differences in the achievement of disadvantaged children and their classmates have been largely eliminated.
- Pupil premium spending is managed effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. This support is regularly evaluated by the deputy headteacher and learning and equalities champion for its impact on pupils' learning and their well-being, and amended or changed as a result. The positive impact of this support is seen through the improving achievement made by current disadvantaged pupils across the school. However, differences still exist in their achievement compared with those of other pupils nationally with the same starting points. The school acknowledges that further work is required to raise the attainment of this group of pupils, including systems to more closely analyse their rates of progress in learning.
- You have ensured that a huge number of strategies are in place to address issues of high levels of persistent absence and low rates of attendance compared with those found nationally, especially for disadvantaged pupils. The impact of these actions are beginning to take effect, with improved rates of attendance and lower persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils in 2017, and much improved overall attendance so far this year compared with last year. You acknowledge that more work still needs to be done to at least fall in line with national averages.
- Staff and leaders at all levels share the same ambition to eradicate underperformance, working tirelessly to solve problems and make continuous improvements. The skills of staff in supporting, prompting and challenging pupils to produce their very best work can be seen in every lesson. This includes teaching assistants whose impact on pupils' learning is substantial. You have ensured that all pupils have equality of opportunity in learning through a consistency of approach to teaching in each year group. Teachers use every opportunity to inspire pupils to write, such as in Year 4 where pupils developed their comprehension skills and justified their own opinions in work linked to the life of Rosa Parks as part of their topic on American civil rights. Pupils in Year 5 worked cooperatively and productively to find the areas of different irregular shapes by using estimation and approximation. Pupils in Year 6 successfully solved multiplication calculations using decimals, linking abstract methods to a pictorial representation to consolidate their understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- differences continue to diminish between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally who have similar starting points in both their standards of attainment and rates of progress made in their learning
- current tracking systems are further developed to ensure that leaders have accurate information on the rates of progress made by individuals and groups of pupils in their learning across school
- pupils' rates of attendance continue to increase so that they at least match those found nationally, and that fewer pupils are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the learning and equalities champion and the early years leader. I held an extended telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. I visited lessons in each key stage alongside the deputy headteacher and reviewed a small sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school and looked in pupils' workbooks when in lessons. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in the 2017 statutory assessments, the 125 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, and the school's website.