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Mrs Sara Bainbridge
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Dear Mrs Bainbridge

Short inspection of Barmston Village Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 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 January 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 and your deputy headteacher make a formidable team, working closely in driving up standards and creating an environment that is inclusive and nurturing for all.

You know the school and its context well. As a result, you have a well-placed understanding of the barriers that face the young people. This is allowing you and other staff to work with children and their families so that pupils' outcomes by the end of each key stage improve at a marked pace. You, ably supported by your deputy headteacher, other leaders, including governors and staff, work with determination to improve life chances for every pupil. Consequently, under your modest, decisive leadership, the school's improvement journey is strengthening, and staff and pupil morale is very high.

You recognised quickly that pupils' outcomes were not where you wanted them to be, and, as a consequence, you have worked successfully with staff to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching is consistently characterised by high expectations, strong and purposeful relationships and effective questioning that develops and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' planning is well thought through, and the use of high-quality assessment enables pupils' needs to be more readily met. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment across the school are improving. Your priorities for improvement are accurate and clear, and you are unwaveringly dedicated to ensuring that all pupils achieve their very best. Therefore, you are strategically planning for the continued improvement of

children's experiences in the early years and pupils' outcomes by the end of key stages 1 and 2, particularly in reading.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' writing has shown improvement, particularly for boys. This is because the profile of writing has been increased across the school and it is an intrinsic part of pupils' work in English and the wider curriculum. Staff have benefited from training that has supported their teaching of writing, and, as a consequence, staff expectations of pupils are high. Pupils are challenged to, and successfully do, write for various purposes, genres and audiences. They present their work neatly and with a great sense of pride. As a result, outcomes in writing continue to improve for all pupils, but particularly for those working at a greater depth of understanding.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are impeccable. They treat each other, staff and visitors with respect and care. They behave well in class and around the school during break and lunchtime. Pupils enjoy talking about their work, their achievements and the additional opportunities that school offers them. For example, film club, basketball, dancing and football are all playing a part in developing pupils' confidence, health and well-being. Pupils support each other with their learning and take part in fruitful discussions when asked. You, strongly supported by your whole staff team, instil strong values in pupils, such as respect, tolerance and the importance of caring about each other and being a team player. This prepares them exceptionally well for the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As headteacher and designated safeguarding lead, you have taken the time to get to know the pupils and their families well. You and your team work extremely well together and have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are diligently aware of their roles and responsibilities when it comes to safeguarding pupils.

You all work unrelentingly to ensure that pupils are safe and that their safety, health and well-being are at the forefront of all that you do. Training for staff is appropriate and regular. Therefore, they are kept up to date about any emerging issues. As a result, your team is quick to identify any pupils who may be experiencing any problems or worries. This allows you to act swiftly and effectively so that pupils get the specific help they need. The links you have forged with external agencies and support groups ensure that all is done in a timely manner to care for some of the most vulnerable pupils who attend the school. Barmston Village Primary School is truly inclusive.

Policies and records are thorough and meticulously kept, including those on recruiting staff. Governors take their roles regarding safeguarding very seriously. They have been regularly involved with reviewing safeguarding policies and practices. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the local context and barriers that face some aspects of the school and pupils' well-being. This allows

them to support you, and other staff, so that every pupil can 'be the best that you can be'. A very fitting school motto.

Pupils feel safe and they are happy at school. They enjoy coming to school and do so on a regular basis. School records demonstrate that incidents of poor behaviour are not common, and this is supported by pupils. Pupils commented on the fact that bullying is rare and that they feel confident that if they have any worries or concerns an adult would sort them out for them swiftly. Pupils also spoke about how, through opportunities in the curriculum, for example personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons, they are taught, at an age-appropriate level, about diversity and relationships. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about the work that you and other staff have done to create the school parliament so that pupils have the opportunity to explore democracy in action. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive and are proud to be a part of this inclusive, happy school community.

Inspection findings

- The first area that I wanted to explore was how you and other leaders are sustaining improvements by the end of key stage 2, especially in reading. Despite some areas being below national averages historically, more pupils achieved in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Strong teaching throughout key stage 2, work in pupils' books and current pupils' assessment information indicate that this trajectory is set to continue. You acknowledge that the work to sustain these improvements must continue at the current marked pace, particularly in reading.
- Your and your deputy headteacher's work to rapidly improve reading across the school is paying off. Since last September, new approaches to the teaching of reading have been put in place. These are giving pupils more opportunities to develop their retrieval, inference and deduction skills, and pupils are increasingly confident dealing with and using vocabulary across a wide range of subjects. All of this is contributing to pupils' improved levels of attainment in reading.
- While listening to pupils read, I was impressed with how their fluency is developing and how they systematically use their phonic skills and the 'ask a friend for help approach' to unpick words that they find tricky. Such approaches are developing pupils' confidence and resilience to deal with more challenging texts. Pupils commented on how much they enjoy reading with adults in the school, and how the wider range of reading materials available to them is encouraging them to read more and, as a result, make gains in their reading skills.
- Another area that I looked at was the effect of leaders' work to sustain outcomes by the end of key stage 1. As in key stage 2, there were overall improvements evident by the end of Year 2 in 2017, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those achieving at a greater depth of understanding. Inspection evidence indicates that this trajectory is set to continue.
- Highly effective teaching throughout key stage 1 is contributing to more pupils being better prepared for the demands of Year 3. Teaching is consistent, and teachers' high expectations and well-organised and established routines are

playing a major part in this preparation. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and effective questioning make sure that pupils are always thinking and have opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. The vast majority of pupils have a secure understanding of phonics, and teacher modelling of phonics supports pupils' learning and builds on prior learning.

- Next, I wanted to establish what leaders were doing to ensure that children in the early years have every opportunity to achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception.
- A large proportion of children enter the early years with starting points below those typical for their age. However, you and your early years leader do not see this as a barrier. A concerted team effort, effective planning and use of assessment and strong teaching ensure that every child receives high-quality teaching and experiences every day.
- Children benefit from a vibrant environment where they are encouraged to be inquisitive, independent and creative. This is providing current children with opportunities to develop and extend their skills in language and communication and personal and social development. As a result, children's progress is improving in the vast majority of prime areas. Strong leadership and child-centred learning are at the heart of the early years provision. Assessment is used to match learning to children's needs.
- Adults plan a wide range of activities to support children to make strong progress. For example, in Reception, I was privileged to observe a wide range of children enthralled in activities that involved practising dance routines, making slime, preparing food in the kitchen area and learning outside about gardening and plants. Well-planned activities provide an extensive range of opportunities for children to continuously develop their physical and social skills. However, you are aware that more opportunities need to be planned so that children's skills can accelerate earlier in the academic year, particularly their language and communication skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children's rates of progress continue to accelerate, particularly their communication and language skills, in the early years so that more are better prepared for beginning Year 1
- improvements in pupils' outcomes continue to be sustained and further consolidated, and particularly pupils' reading skills continue to develop at the current rapid pace.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other leaders, including governors, to evaluate the strengths and areas for development across the school. We also discussed the actions taken to improve the quality of pupils' writing, particularly that of boys, and the quality of teaching across the school since the previous inspection.

Together, we visited all classes in each phase of the school, particularly the early years, to evaluate the improvements asserted since the previous inspection. I discussed with you current pupils' assessment information and I reviewed a wide range of work in pupils' books, particularly concentrating on pupils' achievements in writing. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning and experiences of school. I listened to a group of pupils read. I read and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation document and the school's development plan. I also scrutinised attendance information and documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

I took into account the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey, the 32 responses to Parent View and the 15 free text responses received. I also took into account the 35 surveys completed by pupils.