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21 June 2017

Mr David Warbrick  
Headteacher  
Beckstone Primary School  
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Dear Mr Warbrick

### **Short inspection of Beckstone Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017, 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 2011.

#### **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 highly skilled deputy headteacher have a clear vision which all staff share. You know the school well. Your plans to improve the school further are based on a wealth of information that you gather. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. You check and monitor the performance of staff and support them to improve their work further. As a result, several staff are working towards additional qualifications that will enable them to take on leadership roles in the future. Staff value the professional development opportunities you give them and the way in which you allow them to try out new ideas.

You and your team have taken effective action to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. As a result, leaders of English and mathematics have clear plans for improvement. These plans use teachers' assessments of what children know and can do to plan for further development. Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have plans which focus on improvements that are specific to their subject area. These plans are based on information from a range of sources, including looking at pupils' work and checking teachers' planning. All plans have clear, measurable outcomes which enable governors to ask questions about their impact. However, subject leaders in history and geography do not focus sufficiently on what pupils know and can do when planning improvements.

Consequently, pupils make less progress in these subject areas. You acknowledge that teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to use their skills of investigation and enquiry in history and geography across the school. Teachers do not give sufficient time to these subjects, particularly in Year 6. You have already identified this as an area of focus for school improvement.

The early years leader has brought about consistency of teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff plan and work well together across the early years. There is a clear focus on the needs of individual children, and adults make regular checks on what children can do. Adults use this information to help plan the next steps in learning. However, you acknowledge that these checks are not linked well enough to all of the areas of learning. Consequently, children make varying amounts of progress in different areas. You recognise that children make less progress in reading and writing and do not reach the same standards as other children nationally in these areas by the end of Reception.

Pupils are very well behaved. They are always polite and well mannered. Tolerance and respect for others are clear in their work and in their behaviour. Pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements. They are confident and eager to share their work. The curriculum ensures that they have a good understanding of British values, other faiths and cultures and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Parents speak very highly of the school. They value the individual attention that pupils receive. One parent said: 'It's a big school with a small-school feel.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is part of all that the school does. Your governors ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, including checks on teachers and governors. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. Your safeguarding lead has gained the trust of the community and, as a result, she is able to identify any additional needs quickly. She works closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need. She is tenacious in her approach. You demonstrate a great determination to ensure that pupils are kept safe and swiftly follow up any unexplained absences. Consequently, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have built a stable leadership team to help you achieve the ambitious goals you have set.
- Pupils benefit from good teaching at all levels. Your staff use their good subject knowledge to ensure that teaching is matched well to pupils' needs. Consequently most pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress. Children start school with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. They leave

Beckstone at the end of Year 6 with outcomes close to or better than those seen nationally. Teaching excites a love of learning and teachers' skilful use of questioning enables pupils to deepen their understanding. However, teachers do not focus sufficiently on developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in history and geography. Pupils make slower progress in these subject areas.

- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was related to leaders' actions to increase the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception. The majority of children start school with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. An increasing proportion reach a good level of development, so that this is now almost in line with national averages. Your teachers provide a stimulating environment that is filled with language. This, along with adults' skilful questioning, enables children to develop good language skills.
- Children make particularly good progress in number, with some exceeding expectations for their age. Opportunities for developing number work are evident throughout the Nursery and Reception classes. Children count and write numbers independently. Adults encourage children to count everyday objects regularly. For example, Nursery children were counting raisins at snack time. As a result, children make very good progress in their number skills.
- Children behave very well in the early years. They are eager to learn and proud of their achievements. For example, one child in the Reception class came up to me wanting to show me his counting skills. He showed me how he had split six cubes into two sets. He was able to tell me that there were three cubes in each set and six cubes altogether. Effective adult interactions keep children focused and good questioning deepens their thinking.
- You recognise that children's achievements in reading and writing are lower than those of other children nationally at the end of Reception. Teachers do not give children enough opportunities to practise their writing skills as part of their independent learning. Adults do not routinely reinforce phonics skills to encourage them to read. This hampers children's progress in these areas.
- Adults gather a range of information about what children know and can do in the early years. However, this information is not linked well enough to all areas of learning and is not used consistently to inform planning for individual children.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on leaders' actions to increase the rate of progress of the most able pupils in reading in key stage 1. You have adopted some exciting and innovative approaches to encourage pupils to read. We visited the reading bus where children from the Reception class were sharing stories on the top deck of a double-decker bus. The children were happily sharing their stories with one another. Your lending library of good-quality texts further encourages pupils to read.
- As a result of your approaches, pupils develop a love of reading. They say that they read regularly and that they enjoy listening to the stories that adults read to them. Pupils read fluently and with expression. Least-able pupils use their phonic strategies to help them when they struggle with a word. This does not disrupt their understanding and they are able to discuss characters and their feelings.
- Reading is taught well at key stage 1. Teachers use good questioning to probe

pupils' understanding of what they have read. Teachers challenge pupils in reading sessions to think about other aspects of their English work. Teachers use reading texts to develop pupils' understanding of other areas of the curriculum. For example, when talking about the Eiffel Tower in a reading session in Year 2, the teacher asked pupils to identify the city, country and continent that the Eiffel Tower is in.

- I also looked at how effectively governors carry out their statutory duties. Governors are very ambitious for the school and have the children at the heart of what they do. Your newly appointed chair of governors shares the ambition of the leadership team to improve the school further. Governors receive high-quality information from all leaders about the work of the school and in particular about pupils' achievements. Governors appreciate the quality of this information.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for further improvement. This is as a result of your clear plans for future development.
- Governors constantly reflect on their own performance. As a result, they never stand still with their own development. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and have taken steps to make sure that there are governors with the skills necessary to fulfil all duties. Several governors are new to the role and they are beginning to use their wide range of skills to challenge leaders to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make consistently good progress across the school in history and geography by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders focus on what pupils know and can do to inform future developments in their subjects
  - improving teachers' understanding of the key skills needed for pupils to achieve well in these subjects
- outcomes for children at the end of Reception continue to improve by:
  - ensuring that standards in reading and writing in the early years continue to rise for all groups of children, including the most able
  - closely linking what children can do in all areas of development to their next steps in learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Tanya Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team, teachers and governors. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited classes to observe learning and looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with four parents in the playground before school. I considered the 57 responses and the 55 free-text comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 220 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils in the playground and in the dining hall.

I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked with you, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.