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Mrs Catherine Carr
Headteacher
Hunter's Bar Infant School
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Dear Mrs Carr

Short inspection of Hunter's Bar Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you became headteacher in September 2014, you have successfully created a positive culture of learning, for both pupils and staff. You set high standards for how you want staff to conduct themselves and lead by example. Staff are enthusiastic, welcoming, approachable and open to new challenges, because you have created a safe environment, where everyone is valued. In turn, pupils are well supported, happy and love coming to school. Parents and carers value the special atmosphere you have created.

Along with your deputy headteacher, you have pushed forward improvements across the school and built on the strengths identified during the previous inspection. You have been meticulous in seeking ways to improve staff performance. Work with other local schools offers your staff opportunities to work with other colleagues seeking solutions to common issues. You compare the performance of pupils at your school with similar schools within your area. You use this information to support your own school improvement work. Staff take part in research work and use this to review and improve your own practice. You work alongside teachers to help them achieve the best outcomes for pupils. As a result, staff are happy and enthusiastic and standards are high. Staff morale is high and everyone works together towards the same vision.

Your two newly promoted senior leaders have received appropriate training and support to equip them to carry out their roles. Talent spotting and succession planning have been effective. Both new leaders have a proven background of school improvement and are receiving support in their first year of leadership. Consequently, they have made a good start to their new roles and are leading with determination and enthusiasm.

Governors bring a wealth of professional expertise, strengths and skills, which further enhance the effectiveness of the leadership team. They hold leaders fully accountable through a planned series of visits, linked to the development plan and through the questions they ask. They recognise the strengths of the school, and are rightly proud of the high standards and commitment to developing the range of skills pupils need to be successful.

The recent audit of governor skills has allowed governors to deploy the most appropriate members to fulfil their duties. Important areas such as health and safety, finance and standards are led by knowledgeable governors. They are able to hold leaders fully accountable and work closely with leaders to maintain the high standard of education.

You have ensured that the performance of boys has improved since the last inspection. Curriculum adaptations have ensured that boys are now fully engaged in their learning and as a result, they are making rapid progress. Changes to topic titles have made them more appealing to boys, such as 'Where's Wally' instead of 'The local environment'. Teachers have been consistent in adapting planning to ensure that it meets the needs of boys.

You were also asked to ensure that planned activities closely matched pupils' abilities. Activities observed during the inspection in the early years and Year 2 met the needs of all pupils. However, not all teachers provided enough challenge. Some pupils were completing tasks which were too easy and did not allow them to apply their skills. Although it is early in the school year, the match of task to ability was not appropriate for the most able or those who are struggling to catch up.

Your deputy headteacher monitors the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who are from a Black and/or minority ethnic background closely. From her work, she recognises that on occasion some pupils are not receiving appropriate provision in some classrooms. Teachers are not always using groupings effectively to support language acquisition. Some pupils within this group are not making the progress they are capable of.

Parents are particularly positive about all aspects of the school. They praise the way in which teachers build children's self-confidence and go out of their way to support individual needs. Parents appreciate the breadth and balance of the school curriculum, the range of after-school clubs and the homework on offer. One parent commented, 'The school is very good at reinforcing positive messages and encouraging self-belief and resilience.' Parents are kept well informed, know their children are safe and are encouraged to reach their potential.

Provision in the early years is a key strength of the school. Strong links with the over 30 nurseries which feed into the school ensure that children enjoy a smooth start. Leaders have taken part in work to improve transition and as a result, children have settled well into their new school. Parents appreciate how teachers have ensured that their children are happy in their new school. Teachers have ensured that children's new classrooms display photographs of children, taken in visits to their setting, so they feel valued and confident. As a result, children settle quickly and are highly involved and engaged in their learning. Activities on offer encourage independence, resilience and communication. Consequently, children are happy and eager to learn.

Pupils' move smoothly into key stage 2, because you have formed stronger links with the junior school. You work closely with senior leaders at the junior school. For example, your leader responsible for special educational needs and/or disabilities checks how pupils have progressed as a method of checking how successful early interventions for particular pupils have been. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported at the school.

Pupil premium funding supports the needs of the small group of disadvantaged pupils within the school. The employment of a learning mentor has been particularly successful in addressing some attendance issues. The influence of her work is evident through the reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Her work is also valuable in working with families and outside agencies to support particular needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Staff and governors keep updated with any changes through a weekly newsletter. Regular training for staff ensures that they know the signs of abuse. Securely kept records provide comprehensive detail on any incidents that have occurred. Leaders act in a timely manner, and recognise the need to record more detail when recording actions taken. Leaders carefully ensure that all staff are aware of specific children who need extra vigilance.

Inspection findings

- At the end of the early years the majority of pupils are reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The number of children achieving a good level of development has risen over the last three years and remains above the national average. A stronger focus on boys' outcomes has seen an increase in the proportion of boys reaching the expected standards this year. Children leave the early years well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Outcomes in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) continue to rise and the 2017 outcomes are the strongest the school has seen over the last three years.

- Reading outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are well above those seen nationally. A higher proportion of pupils than seen nationally are working at greater depth because teachers have high expectations and give reading high priority. The new senior leader has monitored how reading records are used, and has implemented a more consistent approach across the school.
- Outcomes in writing improved this year because leaders identified barriers to learning and implemented strategies to improve handwriting and spelling. Regular monitoring of standards across the school, particularly for boys, and constructive feedback have ensured that standards have improved across the school. Pupils' written work seen during the inspection shows that children apply their growing grammatical knowledge consistently to their work and teachers check progress regularly. Standards are high.
- The school had a strong focus on mathematics in 2017, which has led to improvements in the number of pupils meeting the expected standard and achieving greater depth. Pupils demonstrated good mathematical knowledge and skills but on occasion, the work did not match their capabilities.
- The school curriculum is well developed. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects enhanced by visits and visitors. Leaders monitor their subjects and collate assessment information on all subjects. Work in physical education is well developed and teachers receive high-quality training. All pupils receive swimming lessons throughout their time in key stage 1. The wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer provides pupils with a rich and varied curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan learning that matches the needs of the different groups of pupils within their class, ensuring that learning for the most able takes into account their prior learning and provides challenge, and work for the least able helps them develop key skills in order for them to catch up
- the attainment and progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from Black and minority ethnic groups continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Lunn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, the learning mentor, and members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I met with your deputy headteacher who is also the teacher in charge of special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as the leader responsible for the use of the pupil premium. I observed teaching in all classes jointly with you or your deputy headteacher. I scrutinised work in pupils' books and samples of their work around the school and in curriculum folders. I checked the school website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I took account of the 74 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, including written responses, and the 24 responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.