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Mr Mark Wilkinson
Headteacher
Ladysmith Junior School
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Dear Mr Wilkinson

Short inspection of Ladysmith Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 April 2015.

The school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education at the school since the last inspection.

You took over as headteacher soon after the previous inspection and have created an inclusive learning culture in the school that is valued by staff, parents and carers, and pupils. Parents praised the responsive nature of your leadership, with many commenting about how quick leaders and teachers have been to address any concerns that they have. They commented that, 'if ever I have any concerns they are listened to seriously', and that there is, 'very visible and effective leadership'. Staff are very positive about working at the school, with all who responded to the staff questionnaire saying that they are proud to be working at Ladysmith Junior School. Pupils love the school, and could think of few improvements that could be made.

The governing body has a good range of skills and showed a deep knowledge of the school. Governors have strong aspiration for both schools in the federation. They have recently been improving the quality of their strategic plans. However, they recognise that some of the school's plans do not have clear enough targets, which prevents them from monitoring them effectively.

Safeguarding is effective

Governors, leaders and all members of the staff team are strongly committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils. You and your senior team have ensured

that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and that records of concerns are detailed and of high quality. The arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet requirements. Leaders have established very effective systems for reporting any concerns about pupils, and staff are vigilant in following these up. School leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that children are cared for and protected from harm. Governors have up-to-date training and regularly check school policies and procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe.

Staff have the appropriate safeguarding training and there are regular short briefings on aspects of safeguarding to ensure that all staff know what is expected of them. New members of staff are carefully inducted into the safe working practices at the school. Pupils are taught how to be safe through lessons, assemblies and school trips. They are taught about how to be safe online, fire and road safety, and a variety of other aspects of staying safe. As a result, they are confident that they are safe and parents agree.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry was about how effectively leaders and governors are supporting the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The progress that these pupils made in their learning had been lower than that of other pupils, and so you had identified this as a key area for improvement. Leaders have taken a range of actions to improve the performance of these pupils. This includes regularly reviewing individual targets with teachers, using additional funding to ensure that all children can get access to online resources, and forging better relationships with parents. Some of these actions have been effective: for example, attendance for these pupils has improved strongly and learning has improved well in some year groups. However, your plan for the improvement of this work does not show a clear link between the identified issues, chosen actions and the impact you expect these actions to have. As a result, leaders are not able to judge how effective their actions have been, and governors are prevented from holding you to account in this area.
- Secondly, we looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve the teaching of reading. You had rightly identified reading as an issue for some groups of pupils, and leaders have taken prompt action to change teaching to address this. Teachers are now using methods that will introduce pupils to a wider range of new words during reading lessons and using carefully targeted questions to enhance pupils' understanding. School leaders have also extended the use of technology to provide pupils with reading books that are at the right level for their developing reading ability. This means that pupils are not put off by books that are too hard but are stretched and encouraged to move on when ready. Leaders are clear that regular reading is vital. They have introduced more rewards to encourage children to read, including being able to read to the Pets as Therapy (PAT) dog. Pupils have been motivated by the use of technology and the competitions that teachers have introduced, and as a result are reading more. However, leaders acknowledge that they should track reading opportunities in school more effectively, so that they ensure that no child misses out. The recent changes to the teaching of reading have increased pupils' enthusiasm and

progress, but leaders are aware that they will need to continue checking to ensure that improvements are sustained.

- The third line of enquiry was how well leaders use information about pupils' learning to improve teaching. Last year, you identified that progress in mathematics was an issue and you and your leaders quickly introduced changes to improve learning in this subject. These were successful and progress improved so that it was above the national average by the time the Year 6 pupils left the school last year. This year, you have used assessment information to identify that most-able pupils had not made strong progress in writing. Your subject leaders for English have quickly adjusted guidance to teachers about what they should expect these pupils to achieve in each year. Leaders have worked with other schools to carry out more checking of the quality of pupils' work to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. They have also raised expectations of the ways that pupils respond to marking, so that pupils become more aware of what they need to do to succeed. It is clear that teachers and pupils are responding to these changes and that these are starting to have a positive effect on learning. However, leaders are aware that these changes will also need to be checked regularly to ensure that the improvement is sustained.
- The last line of enquiry was how effectively leaders have improved behaviour. Previously, there had been a larger number of exclusions from this school than the national average. Since you have been headteacher, you have prioritised establishing strong relationships with parents and addressing any concerns that they have quickly. You have reorganised playtimes, so that there are more activities for pupils and more space for them to play in. You have introduced the 'daily mile' before break starts, so that pupils get more exercise and feel better in themselves. As a result of these changes pupils, parents and staff report that behaviour has improved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- development plans, especially the strategy for improving the learning of disadvantaged pupils, show a clear linkage between aims, actions and impact, so that governors are better able to hold the school to account
- recent changes to the teaching of reading and writing are regularly checked to ensure that they continue to improve progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Morrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with parents, pupils, staff and governors. Together with your deputy headteacher, we observed learning across the school and looked at pupils' work to see the changes that had been made to teaching and learning. I examined a variety of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the performance of the school, development plans, assessment information and the school's website. I also examined records of the checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of the views of the parents from the 86 responses to the Ofsted online survey and from meeting some parents before school. Staff views were assessed by meeting a group of staff and from the 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.