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Mrs Janet Madden
Headteacher
Lakes Primary School
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Dear Mrs Madden

Short inspection of Lakes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 October 2012.

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 committed leadership team are clearly determined to ensure that children make a good start, benefit from a broad range of enriching experiences and develop positive values. You ensure that expectations are high and, as a result, pupils consistently apply themselves across the school day and take considerable pride in their work.

A particular strength of the school is the quality of leadership at all levels. Leadership responsibilities are widely devolved across the school. Potential leaders receive effective leadership training through your membership of the Landmark Teaching School Alliance. Team and subject leaders contribute significantly to the training and coaching of their colleagues. They also contribute through their well-coordinated checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders are also encouraged to conduct research and to trial new approaches. For example, the early years leader has conducted research into how young children acquire language and your mathematics leader is piloting new approaches to developing reasoning and mastery in mathematics. You reflect carefully on the evidence that emerges from these initiatives and adapt your approaches to teaching in response. The school's most recent checks on the quality of teaching show that approaches such as these have successfully improved the overall standard of teaching.

The standard of pupils' reading and writing at key stage 1 was identified as an area for improvement when the school was last inspected. Since then, better teaching

has driven up standards. Outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening check have improved year on year and match the national average. Pupils who fall short of the standard receive regular help during Year 2 and most reach the expected standard by the end of the year. The Year 2 pupils who read to me showed a secure grasp of phonics and the skills to decode new and unfamiliar words effectively, allowing them to make good progress through their books. In recent years, standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 have been in line with or above those seen nationally. This represents good progress in reading and writing for pupils, as the majority of children enter the school with skills below those typical for their age.

Your strategy for the use of additional funding is proving effective. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been as good and sometimes better than that of other pupils in the school. Over time, the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has diminished. Currently, the difference is relatively small across each year group, indicating that your current strategies are working well. You also cater effectively for the high proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They too make good progress from their varying starting points. One parent who responded to Parent View wrote: 'The expertise and relentless patience to help my child remain in mainstream education and maximise their potential have been commendable.' Governors receive detailed assessment information across the year and monitor the progress of pupils carefully. They attend your termly meeting in which you specifically review the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.

The quality of your ongoing assessment information ensures that you know exactly where pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. For example, mathematics skills are a relative weakness in the current Year 6, and writing is relatively weaker in Year 5. As a result, you have set bespoke performance management objectives for teachers to ensure that they focus on addressing the particular weaknesses in their classes.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents, pupils and members of staff who responded to surveys or spoke to me during the inspection believe that the school is a safe place for children. This is because you and other leaders give safeguarding a high priority. You make thorough vetting checks to ensure that everyone who works in or visits the school is suitable. You also provide regular training and updates for staff to keep them well informed about how to recognise the signs of abuse, neglect or possible extremism.

You have well understood procedures in place for members of staff to report concerns and you keep detailed records of the actions taken to protect children.

You and your deputy manage a demanding caseload of child protection work very professionally. You work effectively in partnership with other agencies and, when

necessary, provide robust challenge to external partners to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to protect children at risk.

Inspection findings

- As headteacher, you place the development of your staff at the centre of your role. Over time, you have developed strong arrangements for staff training and development, including being a centre for the initial training of new teachers. This developmental culture ensures that everyone feels valued and committed to achieving the school's stated aims. You also ensure that all teachers are held firmly to account for the progress of their pupils through the school's performance management arrangements.
- Shortly after the school's last inspection, the school began accepting two-year-old children who have SEN and/or disabilities or are disadvantaged. You have well-resourced facilities that cater effectively for their needs. Teachers and other adults focus particularly on developing children's speech and language, as for many this is a barrier to their learning. Adults work hard to engage children in conversation and song. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes has placed an increasing emphasis on developing basic skills in reading, writing and number. As a result, the proportion of children making good progress and reaching a good level of development has improved to be in line with the national average.
- Progress across the curriculum continues to be good at key stage 1. A pilot project introduced this term to enhance the teaching of mathematics is beginning to show positive results. Teachers are placing more emphasis on reasoning skills and pupils' mastery of mathematical concepts. Teachers have begun to find that pupils are more prepared to attempt more challenging questions.
- Over recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been variable. Current assessment information continues to show some variability in the attainment in different subjects within different year groups. In order to address this in English you are ensuring that pupils give more time to editing and improving their writing. The work in their books shows that pupils now regularly go back and improve their work in response to the teacher's feedback. Technically, pupils have a good grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar because teachers place real emphasis on precise use of language. Outcomes in the key stage 2 national curriculum English grammar, punctuation and spelling test were well above the national average at both the expected and higher standard last year. You also plan to extend the key stage 1 mathematics pilot to key stage 2 next year, although this will require further training for teachers and support staff.
- Not enough of your most able pupils have made the progress that they should. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 has been below the national picture. As a result, you have begun to track the progress of these pupils discretely. In mathematics, the most able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, are now set more challenging work. In English, teachers and support staff are giving the most able pupils more scope to work independently and to follow their own ideas.

- The school has good planning in place to ensure that teachers develop pupils' skills across the wider curriculum. Relevant and stimulating topics skilfully integrate different subjects. These topics are enriched by a good range of learning opportunities beyond the school. For example, pupils' understanding of local history and their writing skills were effectively developed when they prepared information labels for exhibits in a local museum. Topics also successfully integrate aspects of learning that develop pupils' understanding of British values and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the 'best of British' topic this term has helped Year 5 and Year 6 pupils develop a good understanding of democracy and the electoral system.
- Governors provide effective strategic leadership. They think carefully about the future direction of the school and act to ensure that the school remains well connected to external sources of support. They receive thorough reports from leaders within the school and invite external scrutiny from partners within the teaching school alliance. Consequently, they have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. Governors actively review information about pupils' progress across the year and look carefully at the way that additional funding is used.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the variability in attainment across different subjects in some year groups in key stage 2 narrows quickly
- a greater proportion of the most able pupils go on to attain the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2
- teachers and support staff are provided with the necessary training to ensure that the mastery mathematics curriculum is successfully extended across the whole school.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, a group of middle leaders and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils and listened to some of them

read. Together we visited lessons in each phase of the school to look at the impact of your work to develop the quality of teaching. During lesson visits, I checked some pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' work with the literacy and numeracy coordinators, in order to evaluate the progress that pupils had made over time. I looked at the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). I also considered the 12 responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, assessment records and other information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, especially in key stage 2. I also looked at the quality of provision for two-year-old children and at the breadth and balance of the curriculum. I also looked at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.