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10 April 2017

Mrs Amanda Forbes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Forbes

### **Short inspection of Beaconhill Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 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 have strengthened leadership by building a strong team of leaders across phases and subjects. Your team bring valuable experience and stability but you have enriched this with changes to roles and responsibilities to widen experience and further enhance expertise. Teachers and teaching assistants work with a shared commitment to improve pupils' progress and their wider personal development. As a result of good teaching, close tracking and effective support, pupils make very good progress.

You and your teachers have responded extremely successfully to the increased demands of the new national curriculum and associated assessment tasks. You have strengthened the curriculum and provided regular assessment opportunities to support staff and pupils in the transition to more challenging assessment. As a result, in 2016 pupils made extremely strong progress in all areas at key stage 2. This success was further reflected at key stage 1 where the majority of pupils made good progress from their starting points. In addition, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above that seen nationally, placing the school in the top 10% of schools nationally on this measure. However, the overall proportion of pupils to achieve success at greater depth was below that seen nationally at key stage 2 and particularly at key stage 1. Leaders are aware of this and are currently strengthening the curriculum to

accelerate pupils' progress at key stage 1 and create further opportunities for learning in greater depth at key stage 2.

Your focus on pupils' development in literacy and numeracy has been complemented by curricular experiences that have developed a breadth of understanding of other subjects and promoted pupils' wider development. Your school was recently awarded 'beach school' status and key aspects of the curriculum are influenced by the school's proximity to the coastal environment. This unique experience provides pupils with meaningful settings that stimulate their poetry and creative writing and provides authentic contexts for pupils to explore coastal formations. The majority of pupils take part in a diverse range of extra-curricular clubs, including singing, street dance and writing club. In addition, pupils talk enthusiastically about their participation in football, netball and hockey but also about less conventional activities such as judo and hoola-hooping. Additional study support also takes place after school. Pupils also value the opportunity to carry out responsibilities as peer teachers, mentors and council members. These diverse experiences enhance pupils' social and cultural development, and develop their self-confidence.

You have developed leadership capacity by giving colleagues leadership experience and responsibilities in areas such as special educational needs and governance. The school's strengths are sought by other schools and you and your team have shared your expertise in leadership and in teaching and learning in the early years and at key stage 2. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and standards of work over time in pupils' books. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and individual teachers have half-termly meetings to review the progress of pupils in their class. Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well and these reviews inform future improvement activities and interventions to support underachieving pupils, such as the well-focused mathematics support. Staff morale is high and teachers value their professional development. Teachers show accuracy in their assessment practices as a result of regular moderation with the local authority and partner schools.

Your team are committed to the personal and social development of pupils. A specially trained learning assistant provides social and emotional counselling for pupils. Your actions to promote good attendance are successful and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving and are in line with those seen nationally. These pupils also make very good academic progress. Links with parents are strong and the vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, appreciated the support that teachers provide and the progress their children make.

You have an experienced and committed team of governors who share a passionate commitment to the school. Their strategy of working in pairs to review particular areas of the school's work, such as the use of additional funding, enables them to bring further scrutiny and shared reflections on the school's performance. They make regular visits to the school and track progress at review meetings. Governors carefully question performance management processes and their links to pupil

outcomes. Governors are keen to develop their expertise in their roles by embracing training opportunities and developing links with local governor networks.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team maintain a strong focus on pupils' welfare. Staff receive up-to-date training on a wide range of key safeguarding issues. The school has a specifically trained teaching assistant who provides emotional support for pupils. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults working at the school. In discussion and in responses to questionnaires, the vast majority of pupils expressed that they felt safe and happy at the school and this is reflected in the above average rates of attendance. Any concerns over pupil welfare are swiftly addressed and the school has effective links with external partners, although in some cases these concerns are not as swiftly documented. Pupils spoken with were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online. The vast majority of pupils and their parents and carers feel that the school effectively addresses any incidences of bullying, although a small minority of pupils and parents expressed concerns over some aspects of the school's responses to bullying.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your team have instilled a culture of high expectation and built rigour into teaching, learning and assessment that has enabled pupils to respond well to more challenging curriculum demands. In the 2016 national testing at key stage 2, pupils achieved extremely good outcomes, achieving standards of attainment and progress that were well above those seen nationally.
- Teaching is consistently good across the curriculum and teachers work effectively with teaching assistants to support pupils in making good progress. Strong classroom teaching is complemented by sharp, well-paced interventions. In Year 6, there was evidence of considerable challenges as pupils explored the links between the style and language of a poem and other novels and poems that they had read. Teachers engender effective learning behaviours in pupils who are comfortable when asked to explain or develop a response to a question. Teachers provide valuable feedback in line with the school's policy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants effectively develop pupils' reading skills and achieve outcomes in the phonics screening check that are above those seen nationally. Pupils' reading skills develop strongly as they progress through the school, so that by key the end of stage 2 they achieve much better progress than that seen nationally.
- Pupils develop strong writing skills and demonstrate accomplished writing in their books over time. They have the ability to write effectively in a range of genres and their work is underpinned by strong standards of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Teachers teach pupils an understanding of grammar and punctuation in creative and relevant contexts and this enables pupils to use these skills to considerable effect in their own writing.

- Pupils achieve strong outcomes in mathematics as a result of well-planned teaching and incisive additional support. Work in pupils' books revealed that they have regular opportunities to develop their computational methods through frequent practice. In upper key stage 2, pupils experience increasing challenge in word and number problems and opportunities to apply their mathematical reasoning.
- While pupils make good progress at key stage 1, in 2016 the proportion that achieved greater depth in their assessments was below that seen nationally. Leaders are investing increasing challenge into the curriculum and this is contributing to increasing proportions of pupils exceeding their expected standard at key stage 1, with stronger progress evident in Year 2.
- The quality of teaching in the early years has considerably improved in recent years such that it is now an area of strength. Leaders share their expertise with other schools. Children make very good progress through imaginative teaching and thorough assessment. Developments such as the 'musical movement' initiative have developed children's coordination and gross motor skills as they trace number and letter shapes with wands, scarves and ribbons. These activities subsequently hone their fine motor skills as they use subtly modified pencils to create letters and numbers.
- Pupils are well behaved and conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the site and in lessons. A number of pupils willingly take on responsibilities as mentors and school council members. Pupils work productively in lessons and show a willingness to respond to questions and participate in discussions.
- Teachers monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely and work intensively to remove any barriers to their learning. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress, particularly at key stage 2 where they consistently make progress that is much stronger than other pupils nationally. In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above other pupils nationally, preparing them extremely well for secondary school. At key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils are making improving rates of progress although the proportion of disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth at both key stages is below that seen nationally.
- Leaders have a close understanding of their pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual support plans highlight their needs and school provision is enhanced through strong links with external partners, including speech and language specialists and family liaison workers. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress. While the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils made good progress in writing and mathematics in 2016, the proportions working at greater depth are below those seen nationally.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- strengthen the curriculum to increase the proportion of pupils working at greater depth
- further diminish differences between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers nationally at key stage 1
- continue to work closely with parents and pupils so that the concerns that a small minority express on bullying can be effectively addressed.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I met three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I also talked to the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I undertook a learning walk with you and I also looked at pupils' work in books and folders. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record of security and suitability checks on staff. I took into account 156 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and five free-text responses from parents. I also took into account 33 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.