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Mr Ashley Parry
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Parry

Short inspection of Newtown Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 November 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 your appointment as executive headteacher, your attitude of 'Let's do it!' has encouraged staff to broaden pupils' horizons. You and the staff benefit from collaborating with other local schools, through the Peak Edge Group of Schools (PEGS). This group provides, for example, training for staff and sharing good practice. Staff value that you listen to their views, telling me, 'Our opinion matters.' You welcome their efforts to introduce interesting activities both in and outside classrooms. The outdoor area has been enhanced and provides a range of equipment for pupils to use. The majority of pupils in Years 3 to 6, along with their peers from nearby Thornsett Primary School, participated in 'Young Voices', when they sang in a mass choir with pupils from many other schools. Pupils are excited to be competing in the county basketball finals, having been crowned local champions. Other pupils take part in local cookery events and visits to the church.

Since your appointment, there have been periods of turbulence in staffing. Several teachers have taken maternity leave. You have made certain that the temporary teachers you have appointed have not only been able to provide effective teaching for the pupils, but have also introduced new initiatives to enable the school to continue to move forward.

The school will be federating with Thornsett Primary School in April 2018. You and the governing body welcomed feedback from parents and carers when you consulted with them. You and the chair of the governing body are looking forward to the forthcoming meeting with parents, when you will define the aims and values of, and determine the

future direction for, the federated schools. The governors have rightly ensured that a governing body remains in place during this time of transition, to ensure that leaders continue to benefit from support and challenge.

Due to the changes being made, and the current turbulence in staffing at Newtown Primary School, middle leaders are not effectively undertaking their roles at this time. They do not have a strategic overview of their areas of responsibility. You recognise that the forthcoming federation is an opportunity to establish more clearly defined leadership roles and responsibilities so these leaders will impact more effectively on provision and standards.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that time in lessons was well used, and to ensure that teachers provided pupils with opportunities to solve mathematical problems, providing enough challenge for the most able pupils to be able to reach the highest levels. As we toured the school together, we saw that time is well spent and pupils are productive in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with an appropriate balance of support when they need it and encouragement to have a go at something that might improve their work further. Adults ask well-considered questions and check pupils understand the concepts taught. Pupils in Class 1, for example, told me what they had learned about Christopher Columbus. As they composed their own writing, they explained the purpose of writing a diary.

Older pupils showed me several examples in their books of when they had used the skills they had learned to solve mathematical problems. Teachers provide pupils with additional equipment to help them understand new concepts and solve problems. In lessons, teachers plan learning activities for pupils to build on what they already know and can do. Pupils' books show that teachers plan sequences of lessons to build steadily on pupils' previous knowledge. By the end of 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard, and the proportion achieving the higher standard, in mathematics, had both risen to exceed the national averages. You still seek further improvement. The assistant headteacher has joined the newly formed local 'maths hub' and shared the training she has received to help other teachers improve pupils' reasoning skills. This has been a recent development and you both recognise that more work needs to be done to fully embed this practice across the school.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Every parent who expressed a view would recommend the school. They particularly value the open culture where they feel able to talk with staff about their child.

Around the school pupils have good manners, always stepping aside to allow adults first through doorways. They cooperate well with their peers. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger pupils. Year 6 pupils organise clubs, such as arts and crafts, for younger pupils to attend at lunchtime. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument, raise money for a variety of charities, and enjoy a range of day trips and a residential visit.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure

that staff have the relevant training so they know how to recognise different signs of abuse. They know how to report a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise. Clear procedures are displayed on the staffroom wall for all adults to see. You keep child protection records securely and make referrals to external agencies, including social care, where appropriate. You ensure that all the necessary vetting checks take place when an adult starts to work or volunteer at the school.

Pupils told me bullying simply does not happen at Newtown School. They were, however, confident that if it ever did, they could tell an adult, who would sort it out for them. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for example when they use the internet or cross the road. Representatives from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) have visited the school and talked with pupils to help them understand about personal safety.

Inspection findings

- During this short inspection, I focused on how effectively leaders are using the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils overcome their barriers to learning. I also focused on how well you ensure that children in the early years make progress from their starting points, and how well pupils across the school make progress in mathematics.
- Children start in the early years with skills that are often below those expected for their age. The teacher for the early years knows the children very well. She has gained a very clear understanding of what they can do across a range of subjects and skills. She plans next steps in learning carefully. During her short time in the class, she has made sure that the learning environment is stimulating and provides a range of opportunities for children to learn independently and with support. Children are making good progress from their different starting points. The current lack of a permanent leader with responsibility for the early years, however, is hampering the development of a long-term strategic plan for this key stage.
- You have identified the reasons why, in 2017, pupils made less progress in mathematics than they did in reading and writing. The recent training the assistant headteacher has provided for staff has resulted in early steps being taken to improve pupils' reasoning skills. The school's assessment information shows pupils currently in the school are making better progress in mathematics than was seen last year. However, a scrutiny of books showed that teachers are not consistently deepening pupils' understanding of the concepts taught. In some instances, pupils are given work they can do quite easily.
- You and the staff know the pupils who attend the school well. You consider carefully any barriers to their learning. Since your appointment you have worked with parents to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils because it has historically been too low. Current information shows that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- You and the staff review the progress made by all pupils on a termly basis. Current school-assessment information shows that most pupils make expected progress. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is not far behind their peers. You do not,

however, evaluate precisely which strategy, funded by the pupil premium, has the most beneficial effect on the engagement and progress of disadvantaged pupils. This means that you are unsure what is working best and what is having little impact. As you do not have this information, you are unable to plan the future use of this funding with maximum efficiency.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- evaluate with greater precision the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding to ensure that it is used to full effect in overcoming pupils' barriers to learning
- develop the roles and skills of middle leaders so they improve the quality of teaching and standards in their areas of responsibility
- accelerate the progress pupils make in mathematics by:
 - teachers improving pupils' reasoning skills
 - teachers moving pupils on to work that will deepen their understanding of the concepts taught, as soon as they are ready.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and eight other members of staff. I spoke with the chair of the governing body on the telephone and considered an email from the vice-chair of the governing body. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and I spoke with pupils in classrooms. I also held a more formal meeting with a group of six pupils. I spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone and read the most recent reports from his visits to the school.

Together, we visited all the classrooms to see the learning taking place and we scrutinised a range of pupils' books from every class.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's assessment information, the development plan and the self-evaluation document. I considered the 24 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the eight responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' online survey.