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Mrs Joanne Elliott  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Elliott

### **Short inspection of South Gosforth First 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 February 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment, you and your staff have worked relentlessly to create a culture of teamwork across the school where ideas are valued and everyone is encouraged to contribute. Your ambition to ensure that you provide all pupils with the skills, self-confidence and positive attitude they will need to achieve their full potential is increasingly being met. The school's aspiration to have 'a warm loving heart' informs the day-to-day life of the school. As a result, pupils and staff say they are proud to be at the school and welcome the changes you have introduced.

You have maintained and built on the high standards seen at the last inspection. Outcomes at key stage 1 between 2013 and 2015 were significantly better than seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. When issues have arisen, such as the dip in Year 2 pupils' progress and attainment in 2016, you have acted quickly to identify the weaknesses and taken action to tackle them effectively. Pupils are now making better progress in mathematics, reading and writing.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, the review of the curriculum has led to the provision of more stimulating and exciting opportunities, and ensured that pupils develop a deep love of learning. Consequently pupils say, 'It is a joy to come to this school.'

Lessons are fun and exciting and pupils feel well supported to improve their learning.

Pupils are polite and orderly moving around the school, and arrive to lessons ready to settle and learn. They have a good understanding of the behaviours that support effective learning in lessons and know it is important to persevere when their work is difficult. They have a sense of accomplishment in their achievements and are quick to recognise the achievements of others. However, pupils say they can occasionally be distracted by the silliness of other pupils but that this is dealt with quickly and fairly by teachers.

The governing body is entirely new in the last two years. Governors, led by the chair of the governing body, have worked hard to establish themselves and to get to know the school quickly. They have a detailed knowledge of what is working well and what needs to improve. Recent actions, including skills audits and training, have heightened governors' skills and ability to challenge and support school leaders. Governors have a regular presence in the school and consequently have a comprehensive and forensic understanding of what is being done to deliver improvement. However, school improvement plans do not always capture the actions being taken. In addition, the measures to gauge the impact of planned improvements lack sufficient emphasis on the progress that pupils should make.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors are focused on ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are central to the work of the school. Your relentless reminders and testing of adults' awareness and understanding ensure that there is a culture throughout the school where all staff recognise and act on their safeguarding responsibilities. Regular analyses of concerns and the recording of incidents are factored into discussions with staff to ensure the reliability of practice. Regular meetings at a senior level, including the designated governor, ensure that safeguarding is reviewed and any required action taken. Secure systems and procedures are in place and high-quality records are maintained. Regular training and updates for all staff and governors ensure that everyone is up to date with required practice. The curriculum ensures that pupils feel protected and know how to keep themselves safe, especially when online. Pupils say bullying is rare. They are aware of bullying and cyber bullying, but less secure about other forms of bullying such as homophobic bullying. There is useful information on the school's website to help parents engage with safeguarding, but it is complex to navigate.

### **Inspection findings**

- You recognise that although the standard achieved in mathematics at key stage 1 in 2016 matched that seen nationally, it was not as strong as that in reading and writing in the school and the progress pupils had made had slowed. New mathematics support materials, additional staff training and a sharp focus on reasoning, problem solving and the manipulation of numbers have been introduced across the school to boost pupils' progress. The consistency of

approach and expectations to promote greater challenge in lessons have been closely monitored and pupils' work has been checked by other teachers from in and beyond the school. In addition, opportunities for using and applying new learning in mathematics in a variety of subjects have been identified and utilised successfully by teachers. For example, in a mathematics lesson, information gathered in a previous science lesson on the effectiveness of camouflage was used to inform the analysis of bar charts. The rate of progress pupils are making from their different starting points has improved, and the number of pupils working beyond expectations has improved across all year groups.

- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in the school. In reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2, and in phonics in Year 1, they achieved similar standards to those seen for other pupils nationally. In key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils are making secure progress and some are working at greater depth. These standards are maintained and built on across key stage 2 so that disadvantaged pupils are well equipped to access the curriculum when they go to middle school. The information on the school's website does not fully reflect the strong work of the school and how this is targeted at all disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able.
- The development of a secure and reliable assessment system was identified as a priority at the last inspection. Evidence seen in school performance information and pupils' books indicates that the new assessment systems are now secure and accurate in tracking the progress of learning for individual pupils. They identify emerging gaps in pupils' understanding and identify those pupils who require additional support to maintain or improve their rates of progress. Assessments enable teachers to plan learning that effectively meets the needs of different groups of pupils, including the most able. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils make rapid progress and are already matching and exceeding age-related expectations.
- Assessment information increasingly informs the school's priorities for improvement. Teachers are held more frequently to account for the progress pupils are making. Where issues have arisen, school leaders have acted quickly to support staff to address them. However, information provided to governors does not fully capture the progress that all pupils and groups of pupils are making from different starting points. It lacks sufficient clarity to enable governors to fully gauge the difference that proposed improvements are making to pupils' outcomes across the whole school.
- Evidence seen in classrooms and books shows that pupils continue to thrive. They leave the school well equipped to access the curriculum at middle school. By the time they leave, the vast majority of pupils are working at least at age-related expectations and most are working beyond in all subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. This is because school leaders have ensured that teaching and learning have continued to improve despite the recent turbulence in staffing.
- School leaders have ensured that the transition into the new curriculum has not detracted from their focus following the last inspection. This was to enhance the curriculum so that it provides more stimulating and exciting opportunities.

Evidence seen in books, in classrooms, on the class 'blog' pages and on displays in school supports the views expressed by pupils that lessons are exciting. Teachers work hard to identify opportunities to bring learning to life. These include lively and engaging history themes, the production of play scripts and performances linked to World Holocaust Day, and scientific concepts explored through planting potatoes and investigating 'gloop'.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils develop a secure understanding and awareness of all forms of bullying
- information shared with parents, especially on the website, accurately reflects the safeguarding culture evident in the school and better captures the impact of the work undertaken with disadvantaged pupils, especially the most able
- current rates of progress for pupils, including the most able in key stage 1, are built on so that the proportions of Year 2 pupils working at age-related expectations and at greater depth continue to improve
- information provided to governors has a sharp focus on identifying key priorities and measures for improvement directly driven by pupils' rates of progress from their different starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your acting senior leadership team and a group of governors. I looked at pupils' books and spoke with a selected group of pupils about the school. I listened to some pupils read and reviewed information provided by the school about the progress pupils are making. With you, I visited classrooms to observe several lessons. I evaluated information and comments from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a staff questionnaire. The school's website was reviewed and found to be compliant with the requirements published by the Department for Education.