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Mrs Toni Hilton
Headteacher
Bill Quay Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hilton

Short inspection of Bill Quay Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 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 your school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Despite some more difficult periods since the last inspection when the school's performance dipped, the leadership team has ensured that the school currently provides a good quality of education. The school is aware of the challenges it faces in driving further improvement and is taking effective action to address them.

The school exudes a caring and inclusive ethos that permeates all aspects of school life and supports pupils' effective personal, social and emotional development. The partnership you have developed with parents and carers is noteworthy and they strongly advocate the culture of respect, perseverance and being responsible that the school engenders in pupils. The best interests of your pupils are at the heart of everything you do. Parents especially appreciate the diverse curriculum you have created, which provides their children with a broad and balanced education. As a result of this provision, pupils at the school are happy, confident, kind and academically well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Your involvement in the 'Archimedes project', among other innovative steps you have taken, shows that the school is not complacent and has embraced new ways of stretching and challenging pupils more successfully. Staff say they have learned a lot from observing and working alongside the renowned staff from Shanghai.

The impact of teaching is good overall but you know there is room for improvement so that all pupils consistently receive a core diet of highly effective teaching, day in day out, which maximises their potential. The most effective practice seen during

the inspection showed that teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of and focus systematically on developing pupils' learning in an investigative, interactive and fun way. Pupils are urged to show their mastery of new concepts or skills through explanation or applying them practically. Less effective aspects include work that is too easy for most-able pupils, and spoon-feeding lower-ability pupils so that they do not have to think for themselves.

Staff have benefited from a range of professional development opportunities, including coaching and mentoring, which has improved their confidence and competence. As a result, the effectiveness of teaching continues to improve.

Your assessment procedures and monitoring of pupils' progress are rigorous. They are an effective way of holding staff to account for the amount of progress pupils make. The processes also help you to more accurately identify, and intervene to improve more quickly, areas of lesser impact, so that pupils do not fall further behind. The school has tackled some of the previously identified areas for improvement effectively.

Pupils enjoy learning and say that they give their teachers 10 out of 10 for the success with which they 'help them to be smarter'. They like problem-solving in mathematics and take pride in showing that they can work at a greater depth. Pupils enjoy writing at length because they receive interesting stimuli. On one occasion, a former soldier came to school and shared his experience of being in the army. This linked to the class's second world war theme and ignited their imaginations, resulting in some high-quality writing. Pupils also enjoy art and music and relish the opportunities they get to take part in competitive sport. The visits and visitors they have had are high points of their year. They recounted with delight the residential trips they have had. Pupils raise funds for charities and show empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. A minority of pupils' attendance requires improvement.

Governors demonstrate the necessary skills, commitment and experience to hold leaders to account effectively. They know the school well and, while celebrating the school's strengths, they were candid and accurate in their evaluations of the areas requiring improvement. My scrutiny of governing body minutes revealed many occasions where they have held the school to account and demanded answers concerning a range of school matters. In order to help them moderate their views of the school's effectiveness they have used external consultants. The intervention of local authority subject advisors is valued and has improved curriculum provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Suitable and thorough checks are carried out to ensure that personnel are safe to work with children.

Records show that you regularly provide safeguarding updates and training opportunities to all staff. This helps to ensure that they are aware of, and can apply,

the latest guidance and thinking in their practice. Among many other things, you have refreshed their knowledge and understanding of whistleblowing protocols, child exploitation indicators and the 'Prevent' duty, alongside promoting pupils' mental health. There are clear systems in place to record concerns about pupils, and refer to the appropriate authority when it is necessary to do so. You, as designated lead, have established effective links with a range of external agencies which support the work you do to keep pupils safe. The feedback from parents and carers and their children provide a ringing endorsement of the effectiveness of your strategy. They say that pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for and are aware of the potential risks that they might encounter in life and how to mitigate them, congratulations!

Inspection findings

- Overall, outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils join the school with dispositions, skills and abilities that are typical for their age, yet the proportion of them attaining a good level of development by the end of the early years is above the national average. Similarly, the standards that pupils attain are above national averages in the Year 1 phonics check, and in the national end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 assessments for reading, writing, mathematics and science. Writing is a strength and the progress of Year 6 pupils was in the top 10% nationally in 2016.
- A nurturing ethos, good transition links with the on-site pre-school, and engaging and challenging teaching, together with well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas, are the cornerstones of the success of the early years provision. Links with parents and carers are strong and they are encouraged to play an active role in their child's education. As pupils move through the school this firm foundation is built upon and pupils thrive in the supportive learning climate the school exudes.
- You are aware of the fluctuating attainment or progress of specific groups of pupils and are dealing with it effectively. For example, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils from their starting points has lagged behind that of other pupils in school and nationally, especially in reading and mathematics. You have refined your teaching approaches and this has led to an acceleration in the progress of these groups of pupils. You accept that there is more to do to diminish the deficit further.
- You ensure that the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is deployed suitably, but you need to show more clearly how effective it has been in improving pupils' academic progress. You have had more success in giving opportunities to these pupils to benefit from experiences that they might not otherwise have.
- In 2016, more pupils in Year 6 secured greater depth in writing than others nationally. However, those pupils identified as being most-able are not making rapid enough progress in reading and mathematics. This is because some of the work they are given does not always stretch and challenge them sufficiently.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their excellent overall rate of attendance, which exceeds the national average. Most pupils have responded well to the reward system you introduced and the campaign you launched to improve their awareness of the damage that regular absence can do to their

learning and progress. Your family liaison worker has been key in raising the profile of good attendance and improving the attendance of some targeted pupils. However, a small minority of harder-to-reach pupils are persistently absent and the challenge for the school is to be more effective with these pupils and their parents.

- The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing since the previous inspection. The decommissioning of the additionally resourced maintained unit that the school ran for pupils with complex additional needs such as autism has led to a reduction in the school's funding. On the whole, these challenges have been well managed by you and you have taken some well-conceived decisions which have enabled you to increase leadership capacity in the school and raise the quality and consistency of teaching and the curriculum in non-core subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently accelerated progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is sustained and built upon
- most-able pupils consistently reach the high standards that they are capable of
- the most effective teaching in the school becomes the norm in every classroom
- the rate of persistent absence among a minority of pupils reduces.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The key areas I focused on during inspection were the progress and attainment of the most able and disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also looked at the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum, and the attendance of different groups of pupils.

During this inspection I met with you to discuss the effectiveness of the school and its leadership and management. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes throughout the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books to consider the progress being made by pupils currently in school. I listened to pupils read. I reviewed school documentation such as policies, curriculum arrangements, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to groups of pupils formally in meetings and informally during lessons and at social

times. I reviewed the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the 26 responses parents offered by free text. No staff or pupils registered a response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, although I understand that some staff tried unsuccessfully to access the questionnaire.