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Mrs Angela Walton
Acting Headteacher
Chapel Street Infants and Nursery School
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Cumbria
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Dear Mrs Walton

Short inspection of Chapel Street Infants and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 2016, 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking on the acting headteacher role in September 2015, you have established your leadership of the school and are building on previous success to develop the school further. Staff, parents and governors are all highly appreciative of your approach and rightly hold you in high regard. You have continued the strong ethos of care and love for pupils that is evident throughout school. You, and all your staff, use your thorough knowledge of pupils to ensure that all make good progress.

School staff have confidence and trust in your leadership and feel supported. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are positive about all aspects of school and all would recommend the school to others. Parents particularly comment that their children are happy in school and make good progress. Comments such as 'a wonderful school', 'wonderful staff' and 'Chapel Street is lovely, warm and inviting' are typical examples of how parents feel about the school. This is a happy, purposeful school where pupils, parents and staff have a real sense of belonging to a school 'family'.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated across the school. The majority of pupils make good progress, including disadvantaged pupils, who do particularly well in reading and mathematics. However, you are not complacent and are keen to ensure that all pupils make equally strong progress in all subjects. To

this end, you have identified a need to continue to improve progress further in writing and have plans already in place to address this.

Since the last inspection, the wider curriculum has developed considerably. Pupils have a huge range of opportunities offered to them. For example, all Year 1 and Year 2 pupils attend swimming lessons every week, pupils can learn first aid, attend choir festivals, play the recorder, enter gymnastic competitions and join French club. Parents and pupils say that the extra-curricular activities 'are fun and interesting'.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified a need to improve the rate of progress in Key Stage 1 by increasing pupils' involvement in their learning and, as a result, their engagement and enjoyment. Inspectors also required the school to improve teaching and learning further, by sharing the best practice in the school and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

Leaders have addressed all of these aspects effectively.

- The vast majority of pupils have a positive attitude to learning and enjoy their lessons. Pupils are happy to talk about what they are doing in activities and know what they do well and how they can improve.
- Senior and subject leaders monitor teaching and learning across the school by observing teaching and looking at pupils' work. There are regular opportunities for sharing good practice and regular development of staff. New teachers are nurtured very well and comment on how they feel 'incredibly well supported'. Teachers and teaching assistants are offered plenty of opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge for the benefit of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is rigorous and reflects a strong knowledge and understanding of your families. There are good systems in place in all areas of safeguarding and these are understood by staff. Regular and appropriate training for all staff is undertaken and up to date. There are effective relationships with other agencies and a thoroughness and persistence to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They are confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils are enthusiastic about the ways that staff have taught them to keep safe and talk confidently about how to ensure they stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The vast majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after. As a result, pupils are very happy and keen to come to school.

Inspection findings

- A priority for you and the governors has been to keep stability in school, despite a number of key staff changes earlier in the year. This has been done well, as staff, pupils and parents feel secure. However, you have also been keen to make changes, where needed, and this has had a positive impact. For example, by bringing together the Nursery and Reception classes, children can now share indoor and outdoor space and equipment.
- You know your school's strengths and the areas that need further development. Your school evaluation and development documents are presented in a succinct way that makes it very clear what the school's priorities are. Everyone in school is clear about the direction they are heading and, as a result, you and your leadership team have good capacity for further improvement.
- You have ensured that you know each teacher's strengths and areas for development accurately. As a result, you are confident about who your strong teachers are and who still needs some support and nurturing. Teachers and teaching assistants feel well supported and are encouraged to take up a range of development opportunities.
- The links you have made with other schools, particularly the feeder junior school, have been very beneficial to leadership, staff and pupils. The joint evaluation activities between school leaders have been insightful; staff have been able to share good practice and pupils have enjoyed attending activities at the school they are likely to go on to in the future. I am aware that you intend to seek opportunities to strengthen these links further and I agree that this would be a positive development.
- Governors play a keen and supportive role in evaluating the school's effectiveness and know the school well. You are well supported by the governing body who believe in the school and your leadership without reservation. They quite rightly consider that there is a lot in school to celebrate.
- The information you gather about how pupils are progressing within the class is thorough and detailed. It is constantly used by staff to inform them about pupils' learning and progress and how teaching and class groupings can be adapted to meet needs. Teachers frequently talk to each other about pupils' learning, resulting in both teachers and teaching assistants knowing all pupils extremely well. As one teacher said, 'We could walk in to any room and teach another teacher's class because we know the children like our own'.
- You know that it is important to develop a useful overview of the learning and progress journey that a pupil makes through school. Working jointly with your main feeder junior school to develop this would be supportive to you and your leadership team and beneficial to your pupils as they go from Year 2 to Year 3.
- All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs, make equally good progress. Work in pupils' books shows

progress is consistent in subjects. However, presentation, particularly in mathematics, is often untidy. Achievement in writing has improved over the last few years but you have identified a need to continue to focus on this area as a school to ensure that all pupils make the most progress that they can.

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide engaging and interesting activities in class. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning experiences and play an important part in the progress of pupils.
- Developing good communication skills is a strong feature throughout the school as a number of children start school with speech difficulties or, alternatively, speaking English as an additional language. However, very quickly, children gain confidence and are keen to speak to each other and in front of the class. For example, Reception children happily stood up with finger puppets to recount the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. A parent commented, 'My children have made lots of progress, thanks to the hard work of teachers'.
- Attendance is above the national average. You have good systems for monitoring attendance, absence and punctuality. There are a range of rewards for pupils that are well supported by staff, resulting in attendance, and punctuality, having a high profile in school. Very few pupils are persistently absent from school and those that have been in the past have been very well supported to attend, resulting in significantly improved attendance.
- Personal development, behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness remain a strength of the school. Behaviour is good; pupils are polite, kind and thoughtful to each other. Pupils feel very safe in school and, as a result, they blossom and thrive in their learning and as all-round individuals. Pupils show pride in their school.
- The quality of the curriculum offered to pupils is of a good standard. Topics and themes are well thought out to bring learning alive and interest pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to contribute to topics with their own ideas and interests. Every opportunity is offered to practise English and mathematical skills through the curriculum.
- Children make generally good progress in the early years, sometimes from starting points that are lower than usual for children their age, particularly in language and literacy. Children are offered a wide range of learning experiences and move around the Nursery and Reception areas appropriately. They are well supported in their learning. However, some of the equipment in the Nursery appears 'tired' and worn and some further development of this provision would increase the opportunity for all children to get a strong start to their school career.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities are taken to further strengthen links with the main feeder junior school to support pupils moving from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2,

particularly developing an overview of pupils' progress journey through school

- a consistent approach and high expectations are developed regarding the presentation of pupils' work, particularly in mathematics
- they provide opportunities for adults teaching in early years, in particular in the Nursery, to visit outstanding provision.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your acting assistant headteacher and members of your middle leadership team. I also met with pupils and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of Cumbria local authority. We visited five lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of nine responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour during the school day. I looked at a number of documents, including information about pupils' achievement, your school self-evaluation and school improvement plan, and documents and checks relating to safeguarding.