

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Pauline Webster  
Headteacher  
Millom Infant School  
Lapstone Road  
Millom  
Cumbria  
LA18 4LP

Dear Mrs Webster

### **Short inspection of Millom Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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 February 2011.

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

Leaders and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established a happy, friendly atmosphere where pupils grow in confidence, achieve well and develop a strong grounding for further learning. Staff work together productively, sharing ideas and expertise. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well; they plan activities that capture pupils' interest and build their confidence and self-reliance. Pupils consequently develop very effective social skills and their enthusiasm for learning shines through. They behave well and enjoy learning in a stimulating environment.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points, which are often below those that are typical for their age when they join the Reception class. You make sure that key skills in reading, writing and mathematics are secure, so pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average in 2015, but all pupils, including the unusually high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, made good progress. Pupils who are currently in school are making good progress in each year group because teaching meets their needs well. The proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development at the end of the early years is much higher than it has been in previous years. The majority of pupils in Year 2 are working at the standards expected for their age, specified in the national curriculum.

You have successfully raised pupils' achievement in reading since the last inspection, when it was identified as an area for further improvement. Parents are more involved in helping their children to read and say that they feel better informed about how to support them. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved with effective daily sessions that build on pupils' prior learning systematically. Pupils were keen to read to me and used a wide range of skills to work out unknown words and read with understanding. They talked knowledgeably about their favourite authors and the texts they are reading in subjects across the curriculum.

Engagement with parents is a particular strength and enriches pupils' learning successfully. Parents appreciate the opportunities to settle their children at the start of the day and read with them in class before school finishes. Staff make sure parents are well informed about their children's achievements and know how they can support their children's learning at home. The first aid and family learning workshops were well attended and have enhanced parents' skills. All parents who spoke with me or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were extremely positive. Comments included, 'my child loves school and is doing well; I couldn't wish for a better school' and 'staff know the children really well'.

You have developed highly effective partnership-working with other schools and pre-school providers in the area. Staff benefit from joint professional development, the sharing of good practice and the challenge and support provided through the Partnership of Millom Schools. Your close liaison with the junior school and pre-school providers ensures that children entering and leaving the school make a smooth transition. For example, your shared approach to assessment is enabling teachers to build on children's prior learning from the start and ensures that progression in learning continues as pupils move to their junior school.

You provide highly effective leadership as headteacher, keeping pupils' achievement and care central in your improvement planning. You have developed leadership across the school and this, together with consistently good teaching and robust governance, provides the school with strong capacity to continue to improve. Leaders and governors have an in-depth understanding of the school so improvement planning is focused on the right priorities to sustain the good quality of education and ensure pupils' all-round achievement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and keep detailed records. You have created a nurturing environment in which pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for. Staff have positive relationships with families and make sure they receive support if they need it in liaison with other agencies. All staff and governors have kept up to date with safeguarding training relevant to their role, including the government's 'Prevent' duty.

Pupils feel at ease with their teachers and other adults in school, and know they can share any concerns they might have. The nurture group provides very effective support for pupils who need extra help to fill gaps in their learning and build their confidence. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, relevant to their age, and older pupils have a good understanding of the difference between bullying and falling out. They do not think there is any bullying in their school and parents, staff and the school records endorse this view. Children work and play together with consideration and respect. They are happy to come to school, and unauthorised and persistent absence is below average.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders at all levels have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities because they are involved fully in monitoring the quality of teaching and checking pupils' progress. The information that is gathered is analysed carefully and used effectively to plan for further improvement.
- Well-planned professional development has secured significant improvement in the teaching of reading and supported developments in other subjects. Leaders across the school have developed their leadership skills through participation in nationally accredited courses.
- Governors are knowledgeable and make sure they stay well informed through regular visits to school, analysis of pupils' progress and reports from leaders at all levels. They share the high ambition for pupils and provide good-quality support and rigorous challenge to school leaders.
- The pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is used effectively to improve the achievement and participation of disadvantaged pupils. They benefit from small group or individual support, which helps to fill gaps in their learning. Consequently, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in school are closing.
- All pupils benefit from a broad and relevant curriculum. Topic work is planned carefully to take account of pupils' interests and promote knowledge and skills in all subjects in line with national curriculum expectations. Stimulating additional activities, such as choir, forest school, breakfast club and many other after-school clubs, enrich pupils' learning.
- Children start in the Reception class with variable knowledge and skills; their language and literacy skills are often well below those typical for their age. Children get off to a good start and make good progress, although the proportion reaching a good level of development has been below the national average in the past. This trend has been halted, however; the majority of children in the current Reception class have knowledge and skills that are at least in line with expectations for their age. Teaching meets

children's needs very well, especially in the development of language and literacy skills.

- Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through school. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers make lessons fun and interesting; they speak about their work with enthusiasm and pride. They are motivated by the many opportunities they are given to carry out investigations and solve problems.
- Teachers are using the new assessment systems very effectively to find out what pupils already know and to plan the next steps in their learning. The regular team meetings to discuss pupils' progress make sure all staff know the next steps in each pupil's learning. This is ensuring that support is given quickly if pupils fall behind.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well in lessons and in small groups. They are skilled in supporting pupils to work out their own solutions and develop their skills.
- Pupils receive highly effective support in the nurture group. They love going to 'the sunshine room' where they are given a short-term boost to accelerate their learning and encouraged to 'have a go' at challenging activities. Their self-esteem receives a real boost too.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Pupils learn about British values, such as respect and democracy, through imaginative age-appropriate activities and because such values are integral to the running of the school. Visits out and visitors to the school, such as firefighters and police, help them to understand the rule of law.
- Pupils are making more rapid progress as a result of effective teaching and improved assessment. However, you are all aware that some pupils with very low starting points need to make even more rapid progress if they are to attain in line with expectations for their age.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that existing plans are followed through to make sure that:

- pupils' progress continues to quicken and a greater proportion of pupils attain in line with or above national curriculum expectations for their age
- assessment systems are embedded further in liaison with pre-school providers and junior schools to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning at points of transition.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Cumbria County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the chair of the governing body and five other governors, and spoke with the school's improvement partner by telephone. I spoke with pupils during lessons and at lunchtime, and heard a number of them read. I took account of the views of parents I spoke to and two responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire. I visited classrooms to observe pupils at work and looked at their writing and mathematics books and reading diaries in Years 1 and 2 and their electronic learning journeys in the early years. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and at your assessment systems, self-evaluation, action planning and monitoring of teaching. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, training, safeguarding checks and record-keeping. I also took account of eight responses to the staff questionnaire.