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Mrs Sally Jenkinson
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Dear Mrs Jenkinson

Short inspection of Langdale CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since joining the school in January of last year, you have very skilfully managed to retain pupils' diverse range of exciting and fun experiences while also improving their academic achievement. Parents who spoke to me were keen to comment on the improved relationship they have with you and teachers. They feel fully involved in their children's education and say they know how to help. Most parents also made a strong point about the significant improvement in the teaching of literacy, English and mathematics. One parent said to me, 'My child comes home from school inspired.' Parents say their children 'just love school' and they are clearly very happy, confident and thriving.

The curriculum is rich. Teachers take full advantage of the surrounding environment and community to enthuse pupils and systematically build their personal development. Pupils take part in an extensive range of sports including team games, wrestling, orienteering and open-water swimming. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils can talk very coherently about different religions and beliefs, explaining their similarities and differences. They are very respectful because they understand that they themselves are unique and they accept difference in others.

The behaviour of pupils is excellent because they are taught what it is to be a 'Langdale Learner'. They respond with enthusiasm. They know they will get things wrong, and that is fine, because they will learn from these mistakes. They know they learn better when they discuss, ask questions and take responsibility. They look after each other as they would their family. Pupils get a little confused when asked about bullying because, to them, it is inconceivable that it could happen in this school. Pupils are proud to be part of the school and this community.

Teachers respond very positively to the challenge of working with pupils across a wide age range. They are very adaptable and they say that the culture of mutual support and strong team spirit are critical in helping them to teach well.

You and the governors have very high aspirations for this school and are well on the way to realising them. Governors have seen a considerable improvement in many aspects of the school. They say that it is now much better organised and it is much easier to track the progress that pupils make. They say that, although you do not shy away from tough decisions, you are particularly skilled at developing and supporting others to improve. Governors offer you good challenge and support. They can rely on a broad range of skills and have very strong community links. They are well informed about how well the school is performing because they know how important their role is and take their responsibilities very seriously.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the school's designated safeguarding leader, you demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism and a passion to ensure that pupils are safe, feel secure and are flourishing. You have an excellent knowledge of the support that different agencies provide to children and families. You are tenacious in ensuring that these agencies fulfil their responsibilities promptly and professionally. You deal with vulnerable people sensitively. All staff share your expectations and high standards. They too play an important role in ensuring that pupils are well looked after.

This very human approach to safeguarding is backed up with systematic and thorough record-keeping. Procedures to ensure that only suitable staff are recruited are secure.

Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They learn how to manage risk whether, for example, they are swimming in a lake or using the internet. They look out for each other too. They converse easily with adults and would have confidence in discussing any concerns they have about themselves or indeed any other pupil.

Inspection findings

- Some parents who responded in writing to the inspection questionnaire expressed a concern about academic achievement. They praised the wider aspects of education but felt that pupils are not attaining as well as pupils in other schools. An analysis of accurate pupils' achievement information, over time, confirms that this is indeed the case. However, these differences in attainment with national expectations are diminishing rapidly. This significant improvement is as a result of a clear focus by you, other school leaders and teachers on pupils' academic achievement.

- Pupils who left last year did very well. Considerable attention was paid to their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. When required, effective additional support was given. This resulted in their achievement being stronger than all pupils nationally.
- Children currently in the early years and in key stage 1 are now taught phonics systematically and have been for over a year. However, there is still a legacy from previous poorly taught phonics, so pupils' reading and writing skills across Years 2 to Year 6, although much stronger now, are still not quite as they should be. The picture is similar in mathematics.
- Pupils currently in key stage 2, including the most able pupils, are progressing rapidly and so they are catching up quickly with nationally expected standards in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged, including the most able disadvantaged, thrive in this school. You, other leaders and teachers keep a close eye on their achievement and their attitudes to learning. The school responds quickly when anyone detects a slowing of their progress. Comparison of disadvantaged pupils' achievement with other pupils nationally shows no difference.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well from their starting points. Pupils, teachers and teaching assistants are clear about what they have to do to improve because these pupils' needs are accurately identified. Teachers and teaching assistants know how to help and pupils respond quickly to individualised support.
- Those parents who rightly expressed a concern about academic achievement can be reassured by the highly effective strategies you have implemented and the much improved quality of teaching. Pupils' achievement is improving rapidly and, although now securely good, this aspect of education is not yet outstanding.
- Pupils' personal development has been a significant strength of the school for many years and continues to be. However, you have not been complacent and continue to extend their enriching experiences. Pupils are becoming much more aware of cultural differences between their community and others. The pupils are excited about their educational city visit. The pupils demonstrate their understanding very eloquently when talking about their charity work.
- The concept of a Langdale Learner is fully understood by all pupils. They know how to be highly effective learners and how to support each other. Langdale Learners are very respectful and full of enthusiasm. Pupils' extremely positive attitudes contribute significantly to their rapidly improving achievement. This frame of mind will serve them well throughout education and in other aspects of their lives.
- Teaching is improving because teachers are much clearer about what they have to achieve and how they will achieve it. Recently appointed teachers have settled in quickly. Their energy and ideas make a significant contribution to the improvement in teaching. The highly collaborative and professional culture within the school ensures that teachers and teaching assistants learn from each

other, sharing what works well. You give them good support and they are clear about being accountable for the progress their pupils make. Teaching resources are improving. The new phonics scheme gives structure to teachers and teaching assistants across the school, ensuring that pupils are given consistent advice and guidance.

- You have achieved much in a short time as headteacher. You are rightly beginning to consider how you are going to improve further the leadership qualities of others in the school, distributing responsibility and accountability. The current school improvement planning requires improvement because it does not give a sufficiently clear indication of who should deliver improvements and who should monitor the impact of these. In addition, it is not clear enough how each improvement will have an impact on what pupils know, understand or can do.
- The school's website gives parents, children and the community a good insight into what it is like to be part of Langdale CofE School. It celebrates the wide range of pupils' achievements. However, it does not include some statutorily required information. You have the current documentation and you are in the process of updating the website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further development of improvement planning:
 - includes the core values of the school and that these are reflected throughout all that the school aims to achieve
 - clearly communicates the high aspirations that you, governors and the community have for the school
 - uses, as far as possible, what pupils know, understand or can do as criteria by which success is measured.
- the planned remodelling of the school's website retains the rich insight into what it is like to be a pupil in Langdale CofE School and provides statutorily required information.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Much inspection activity focused on how well:
 - pupils achieve academically
 - different groups of pupils achieve across all subjects
 - pupils are protected.
- I considered the breadth of pupils' experiences and the extent of their personal development.
- In addition, I considered to what extent all levels of leadership have sufficient capacity to improve the school further.

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, a group of pupils and three members of the governing body. I met with a group of teachers and teaching assistants. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. Documents were scrutinised including external audits, safeguarding checks, pupils achievement tracking and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited classrooms with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning. I examined child protection information. I took account of the ten responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and nine written parental comments. I spoke to seven parents before the start of school.