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Ms Wendy Nicholas
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Nicholas

Short inspection of Beetham CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with governors you regularly check on the work of the school. The accuracy of these judgements is assured by leaders from other schools and the local authority. This information is used well to demonstrate how you have successfully tackled areas for improvement from the previous inspection and to plan further improvement priorities.

Your new system to monitor pupils' progress provides teachers with the information they need to plan work at the right level of difficulty for pupils. You encourage teachers to try out new ideas to further improve teaching and therefore raise achievement. Teachers explained how they routinely share ideas to develop their teaching skills, such as increasing the use of questions, which you were asked to improve in the previous inspection. You have successfully developed a supportive culture in which they say 'it is not seen as a weakness to ask for help'. Teachers also willingly share their skills more widely, outside school, such as through providing support in effective phonics teaching for trainee teachers.

One of the key lines of enquiry for this inspection was to find out if your actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment in the early years foundation stage made a difference to achievement in 2016 and if these improvements are continuing. Your plans to start nursery provision in September 2017 demonstrate your commitment to making sure all children get off to the same good start and

inconsistencies seen in the wide range of pupils' starting points, based on their previous experience of learning, are reduced.

I also wanted to find out about the actions you have taken to bring about the improvements seen in reading across the school and you wanted to show me how you are now bringing about similar improvements in writing. Although teaching in reading and mathematics have been consistent strengths of the school, writing has been less strong in the past. Attendance has been consistently above the national average for several years. A key line of enquiry was therefore to find out why it is that pupils like coming to this school and if this trend continues.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have successfully created a culture of safeguarding in school in which all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are suitably detailed and of high quality. All staff, including governors, have completed safeguarding training to a minimum level and can explain the actions they would take if they had any concerns about a child. Staff understand their shared responsibility to keep children safe. Pupils are confident and have a good understanding of keeping themselves safe when meeting strangers, using computers and using roads and footpaths. This was confirmed by pupils, and parents are confident their children are safe at school.

Pupils say there is no bullying in school. When pupils use 'unkind words' which are reported to an adult, teachers sort this out quickly and stop it from happening again. Pupils who have medical needs are exceptionally well supported at this school. Staff are trained appropriately in providing first aid and delivering emergency medication when required. These pupils are always included in every school trip or visit and detailed risk assessments for activities are included within their care plans. Parents appreciate this extra care provided for their children.

Inspection findings

- Pupils like attending this school because of the support they receive and the rich variety of experiences available to them here. All staff at this small school know the pupils and their families exceptionally well and teachers make sure that work is adapted to meet the needs and interests of pupils in their care.
- Pupils have an appreciation of justice and explain well the importance of everyone upholding the school's 'golden rules' to ensure fairness and equality for everyone. They have a good understanding of British values because they know about similarities between their pupil parliament and how debates are organised in the Houses of Parliament.
- You have made sure that all pupils experience a broad curriculum. Pupils can learn to play musical instruments such as percussion instruments, the ukulele and ocarina and all pupils learn to speak French. Pupils enjoy the many enrichment activities available, including their canoe day and visit to a local climbing wall. You have creatively solved the problem of a lack of space for physical education by arranging for pupils to use the nearby facilities in a local secondary school.

- You encourage teachers to make science interesting by including practical investigations. Teachers plan creatively for this so that pupils remember the activity. Pupils talked enthusiastically about how they used toilet rolls to work out the distance between planets in our solar system.
- You work collaboratively with leaders from other schools in the South Lakes Rural Partnership. For example, you know teachers' assessments are accurate because these have been externally moderated.
- Following your external review of the teaching of writing, you introduced new approaches to modelling writing, improving handwriting and tackling weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly enjoying 'story telling' which is helping them to improve their own writing.
- Pupils read well and use their knowledge of phonics and 'tricky words' to read words they do not recognise. However, some pupils are less confident in comprehension. Pupils read books which are appropriately challenging for them, although some have to rely on bringing their own books from home because they say there aren't enough harder books that interest them available in school.
- You have introduced online learning journals to record assessments of children's work in Reception. Although these provide a detailed, accurate and colourful record of children's skills, parents do not have enough opportunity to build on their child's learning in school by recording how they have developed these skills further at home.
- Governance continues to be effective and you took decisive action during the inspection to make sure that the school website met requirements by updating policies and information.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils have access to appropriately challenging reading books across a wide range of subjects and that these include different genres that interest them
- parents of children in the early years are given greater guidance as to how they might contribute to their child's learning through building on school work at home and recording their child's development of their skills.

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

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met you and your staff, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. The views of parents were considered through conversations I had with them as they waited to pick up their children at the end of the day and also from Ofsted's online questionnaire. Other views were considered from Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. I also talked with pupils and staff during the day. You joined me in visits to lessons and in checking pupils' progress from their work in books. I listened to pupils read and also checked your safeguarding documentation.