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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Linda Fletcher
Headteacher
Crosscrake CofE Primary School
Stainton
Kendal
Cumbria
LA8 0LB

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Short inspection of Crosscrake CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, and your teachers, continue to ensure that the school is a happy, harmonious and exciting place for pupils to learn and flourish. Your school is a highly valued part of the local community, and parents travel from the wider area to access the school's provision. Parents say that they are happy with the quality of education that the school provides because their children thrive in your care. When parents collect their children at the end of the day, they say that their children are bursting to explain what they have learned during the school day. Parents appreciate both the work you do to nurture their children and the focus on academic development. Pupils also say that they are happy because behaviour is good, they are taught well and they enjoy their lessons. You are passionate that every child should succeed at Crosscrake CofE Primary School, and you work tirelessly to ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to reach their potential.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is also an important part of pupils' learning and development in the school. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that SMSC remains a strong part of pupils' development. You ensure strong links with the nearby church. It provides regular opportunities for pupils to take part in collective worship. Central to your school is a strong Christian ethos, and your pupils talk with passion about how they live by the Gospel values. Your pupils are keen to talk about the importance of friendship and being kind to one another. You, and your staff, ensure that pupils know the importance of accepting each other, regardless of faith, background or belief. Pupils embrace individuality.

Cultural development is also a key strength of the school because of leaders' work to secure and maintain the school's overseas links, for example, in France and Africa. These links help pupils to gain a wider understanding of the world around them. They also afford pupils the opportunity to undertake charity work for good causes both at home and abroad.

You, your staff and the governing body recognise the vital role the curriculum plays in enabling pupils to achieve well. National changes to the curriculum have been introduced effectively. Aside from the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, there are many opportunities for pupils to engage in cross-curricular projects. Recently, for example, pupils undertook a scientific project to examine owls' pellets to determine their diet. This research culminated in a beautiful art display to remind pupils of the skills they had developed. In Year 1, pupils learn about the different continents through the theme of space. The classroom is brought to life because pupils can sit in a space capsule and look through the glass floor at the earth below. This ignites their imagination so that they are curious and inquisitive. You now carefully plan the use of technology into pupils' learning so that it supports progress well. You have effectively addressed this aspect of improvement from the previous inspection. Added to this, you also ensure that there is a strong focus on outdoor education and this inspires pupils to learn and make good progress. Sport is an important feature of the school's curriculum and pupils regularly take part in a range of sporting competitions. Pupils value this aspect of their education because it helps to keep them active and fit.

Since the previous inspection, you have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' skilful use of questions, for example, allows pupils to make links to prior learning across the wider curriculum because questions promote curiosity and develop enquiring minds. In the early years, children show interest and curiosity in the world around them because teachers help pupils to develop language through their probing questions. Across the school, pupils are routinely asked questions that develop a deep understanding of the topic being studied. In key stage 2, for example, pupils' ability, when questioned, to use a range of complex personification, metaphors and similes was striking. The most able pupils now achieve much better and make strong progress because they are stretched and challenged to think independently.

Aside from questioning, you have equally focused on improving pupils' writing. Across the school there are strong examples of how successfully pupils now write. The 'Percy Vere' wall is one such example. On this wall, the progress pupils make in their writing is displayed and celebrated. This builds resilience in pupils and a 'can-do' culture. Pupils' handwriting has also improved significantly because expectations are high and pupils know that only the best will do. To ensure the accuracy of your writing assessment procedures, the quality of pupils' writing is checked right across the curriculum by using a range of robust moderation procedures.

Your leadership, and that of your governing body, provides a secure basis for continuous improvement. Your middle leaders are also passionate and committed to providing the best learning experience for the school's pupils. Leaders have an

accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and your plans to further improve the school are an ongoing working document. This ensures that actions are appropriate, timely and sharply focused. During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school to improve further. First, you acknowledge that pupils need to develop further their reasoning skills in mathematics. This is so that when they attempt more complex, unfamiliar mathematical problems, they use their prior learning to solve those more difficult problems. Second, you acknowledge that in order for pupils' writing to improve further, you need to develop pupils' ability to spell independently of the teacher. Leaders already have actions in place to make the necessary improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. You and your leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Your work with multi-agencies is effective. You have a secure understanding of how to help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities stay safe. You provide many opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe online, and parents are provided with useful information about how to ensure that their children are safe when using technology. You are leading the way by helping pupils to understand the dangers of 'sexting'. You, and your governors, have begun work to integrate the sensitive issue of 'sexting' into the school's sex and relationships education programme.

Inspection findings

- Your work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a key strength. Your school is fully inclusive and your reputation for tailoring provision to meet the needs of a wide range of pupils is clearly strong because you are passionate about meeting the needs of every individual. You are highly trained to identify and support pupils with additional needs. Pupils do not stay on individual education plans once your strategies to address barriers to learning are successful. The monitoring of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong, and the standards that they achieve are moving towards that of other pupils nationally. You and your staff regularly hold review meetings about all your pupils so that the quality of provision can be assessed for its effectiveness. The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good.
- Leaders' work to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well is effective. Pupils make good progress in both key stage 1 and 2 in reading and writing. This is because your teachers plan effectively to engage boys and girls equally well. The foundation that they receive in the early years is also very strong. For boys, teachers use a range of strategies to ensure their engagement, for example, superhero punctuation. This captures their imagination. In Year 1, pupils' excitement to write about the 'flying bed' was also abundantly clear. Boys, in particular, showed deep concentration and engagement in their learning because they were able to show inventiveness and flair of thought. You recognise that to strengthen pupils' writing further, you need to develop pupils' ability to spell

without too much support from the teacher. You and your staff acknowledge that this should improve pupils' writing skills across the curriculum further still.

- Although mathematics is a strength at key stage 1, and the standards pupils achieve at key stage 2 are broadly average, you have rightly recognised the need to improve outcomes in mathematics further. You have plans in place to address this. For example, you know that pupils' reasoning skills need to improve. Pupils do not routinely draw on their knowledge of mathematics to solve unfamiliar problems. Pupils' understanding of the mathematical concept being studied also needs to be checked more rigorously so that misconceptions can be identified.
- The teaching of phonics is a key strength. Teachers plan lessons carefully and pupils engage well with phonics teaching. Pupils' achievement in phonics is good and by the end of Year 1, most pupils pass the phonics screening check. Those who do not are supported well so that they catch up.
- You and your staff ensure that pupils' reading skills are developed effectively. Pupils read for pleasure a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils often engage with more challenging texts because they are enthused by the challenge of reading more complex books. As a result, pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally in reading by the end of key stage 2. This is because, over time, they build up their skills and become proficient readers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop further pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics so that pupils can successfully tackle more complex, unfamiliar problems
- they develop pupils' ability to spell without too much support from the teacher so that pupils' writing continues to improve.

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

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, parents of pupils from the school, middle leaders, members of the governing body, the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority. Also, I held a meeting to discuss provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons. I listened to pupils read. Furthermore, I

jointly observed teaching and learning in key stage 1, key stage 2 and in the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance information, pupils' assessment information, a range of policies and your evaluation of how well the school is performing. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 29 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, 27 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text, 11 responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire and eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.