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Mrs Sally Linsley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Linsley

Short inspection of Warcop CofE Primary School

Following my visit on 28 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. Your strong, compassionate leadership has been exemplary by responding to recent tragic events with empathy, resilience and courage. Governors and staff have supported parents and carers to reassure pupils so that they feel safe in this warm and happy school. Pupils model the school values in their behaviour and enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the school.

Governors are knowledgeable about their school because they ask probing questions about the school's effectiveness. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is very accurate and development plans are well defined and focused. Leaders and governors are also proud of the wider opportunities available for pupils such as learning a musical instrument or the development of art skills which allow pupils of all abilities to achieve. Consequently, pupils are proud of their achievements across the curriculum.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' handwriting skills. Pupils' presentation of their written work is neat and does not vary between subjects. For example, in Year 4 and Year 5 pupils wrote a first-person recount of the life of a Brazil nut. In this work handwriting was of a good standard. Another area for improvement was to use questioning to challenge pupils' thinking in lessons. Staff received training on questioning techniques so that lessons focus on promoting pupils' thinking skills. I observed this in a Year 2 and Year 3 lesson where pupils were asked to put numbers in the correct order on a blank number line before being

prompted to think about the size of the gaps between each number.

Although pupils make good progress, you agree that more can be done to challenge some of the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils in their mathematics work. You are focused on continual improvement and you have also identified the need to improve the phonics skills of boys throughout the school. This is not only to increase the proportions of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics screening check, which is presently in line with the national average, but also to secure a better awareness of strategies for spelling by the end of key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The pupils that I spoke to emphatically agreed that they feel safe in school. This is because of the culture of care that you have created. Governors, parents and pupils are united in their praise for both you and your staff for your unwavering commitment to ensuring that pupils feel safe, both physically and emotionally. Staff know what actions to take if they have any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being and understand their responsibilities well. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- A recommendation from the last inspection was to provide staff with opportunities to share and build on good practice. We agreed to look at this in greater depth as part of this inspection to see how staff development is improving outcomes for pupils. As a local leader of education you lead the way for your staff by always looking to see how you can develop your skills further and by supporting their development. Teachers who started at the school in the early stages of their career remain at the school because of the opportunities that have been made available to them. They speak enthusiastically about the accredited leadership courses that they have accessed. This has led to one member of staff becoming a specialist leader of education within the local authority. Teaching assistants have also been supported to achieve high-level qualifications. Staff value the opportunities that they receive to develop their skills. This has enabled the retention of some highly skilled staff. The impact of the development of staff can most recently be seen in the progress of pupils in writing, which is above average by the end of key stage 2. Governors also access a range of training to enable them to carry out their role effectively, and their knowledge of pupils' progress and achievement is good. The result of the school's improvement work has led to good levels of achievement at the end of the early years and by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Another line of enquiry for the inspection was to see how effectively teachers are challenging the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils in their mathematics work in key stage 2. The school's own progress information shows that progress for these pupils is improving. However, the work given to some of the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils does not stretch their thinking enough. Pupils say that they find their work easy at times. The work in

pupils' mathematics books shows good progress across each year group in key stage 2. It is successful in ensuring that pupils make good progress. However, the school places a stronger emphasis on attainment rather than progress and as such has not yet developed tracking systems to accurately measure the progress of pupils who achieve above age-related expectations. This means that at the highest levels of attainment teachers cannot accurately identify the next steps in pupils' learning. You have already recognised this as a weakness but the measures that will allow staff to set appropriately high targets for these pupils are at an early stage of development.

- We also agreed that the effectiveness of support for boys' phonics should be a focus for the inspection. The structured phonics programme in place ensures that all pupils are engaged in their learning. However, in lessons the most able pupils and those requiring support sometimes sit through the same introduction and access similar learning. The small sample of writing seen from pupils who have received support for their phonics development shows how they move from making marks to writing in simple sentences in a short space of time. This is due to effective support strategies that have been put in place for individual pupils. The support for boys has enabled better progress in their work but you have acknowledged that more needs to be done. Other initiatives have been introduced across the school to help all pupils with their phonics skills and to develop their spelling later on in key stage 2. Coloured spelling bands are providing a structured way for pupils to improve, but due to their recent implementation there has not been enough time to meaningfully measure their impact on pupils' performance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils' next steps in mathematical learning are identified so that teachers can plan tasks that stretch their thinking even further
- the proportion of boys passing the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 increases
- phonics skills are developed throughout the school to improve pupils' progress and achievement in spelling by the end of key stage 2.

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

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management.
- I visited all classes along with the headteacher and spoke to pupils informally during lessons about their work.
- I heard a small group of Year 4 and 5 pupils read.
- I reviewed safeguarding documentation including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- I discussed a wide range of topics about school provision with pupils both formally and informally.
- I watched pupils at playtime and reviewed safeguarding arrangements.
- I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 2 pupils' books in mathematics.
- I reviewed documentation which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, governors' minutes, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan.
- 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were analysed.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.