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Mr Karl Laithwaite
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Laithwaite

Short inspection of Temple Sowerby CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As the new headteacher of Temple Sowerby, you have made a significant impact in a short time and ensured that the school continues to go from strength to strength. Your hard work and vision has established the school as a valued part of the local community.

You have created an environment that fosters the care and nurture of the whole school community. You, staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of the 'inclusive feel' that is such a strong feature at Temple Sowerby. You are ably assisted by your enthusiastic and experienced staff team. Together you ensure that you put pupils at the heart of all that you do. The recent improvements that you have made are providing pupils with firm foundations for learning. As a result, they flourish, both academically and in their personal development.

Nearly all the parents of the school responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to me or responded to the questionnaire are extremely positive about the school. All would recommend it to others without hesitation. Many parents said that there is a 'positive, welcoming energy' about the school and that it is clear that staff 'care deeply about every child'. Parents also feel that you are 'approachable' and communication between school and parents has improved and is now a strength.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of

Temple Sowerby. They feel that you lead by example. Staff share your vision and aspirations. This has created a strong sense of excitement for continued improvement and a collective desire to achieve the very best for pupils.

Since your appointment at the beginning of this academic year, you have put a great deal in place to secure improvement. You have tightened the use of assessment information so you can closely monitor learning. This has ensured that teachers do not fail to notice pupils if they are falling behind in their learning. You have insisted that basic skills such as learning multiplication tables and spellings are instilled in all pupils. Addressing these gaps in learning has raised expectations across the school and ensured that all pupils are building a secure platform for future learning.

I appreciate that the results of tests and assessments at the end of key stages need to be looked at with caution because the number of pupils in each cohort group is small. Outcomes are good at the end of Reception and Year 1. However, in the past, progress has been more variable elsewhere in the school, particularly at the end of key stage 1 where there are indications of underachievement.

I agree with you that historically the number of children at the end of key stage 1 reaching expected standards and greater depth has not been good enough. However, you have successfully addressed this situation through decisive action. This has resulted in all pupils in your present Year 2 group now making good progress.

At the end of key stage 2, the large majority of pupils reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are mindful that the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth and higher standards needs to improve further. The actions you have already put in place are beginning to lead to improvements, particularly in writing, and are starting to be evident in the work in pupils' books. Current assessment information suggests that the school is on course to have a number of pupils reaching these higher levels by the end of this academic year. However, I agree with you that there is still more work to be done to ensure that all pupils make the gains they are capable of in English and mathematics.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to continue to improve the quality of teaching. They wanted you to make sure that appropriately challenging work is set for pupils, particularly the most able. You were also asked to improve the teaching of phonics throughout the school in order to improve writing and to ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their mathematical skills through more problem-solving activities. Leaders have ensured that the following improvements have taken place:

- Since the previous inspection, some of the teaching team has changed. Your insistence on employing high-quality, experienced staff has ensured that they have 'hit the ground running' and are having a positive impact on the progress pupils are now making. Pupils are offered activities that challenge them and there are some opportunities to solve mathematical problems. However, you

have rightly focused this year on ensuring that the fundamental skills that some pupils were lacking, because of gaps in their learning, have been addressed. This has been very successful and pupils are now confident and proud to share, for example, a range of mathematical skills. A number of pupils were keen to ask me to test them on their knowledge of multiplication tables. You are very aware that there is now a need to increase the opportunities that pupils have to be extended and challenged. This is so that they can apply their learning and think more deeply about their work. Developing greater ownership and independence in their learning will help them to work things out for themselves.

- The teaching of phonics is very strong across the school, resulting in the vast majority of pupils meeting the expected standard in the national phonics checks at the end of Year 1. Pupils who were not able to meet the standard have benefited from good-quality, focused, additional support. Consequently, they are making good progress.
- Writing has a high profile in the school, as have the grammar, punctuation and spelling skills needed to write effectively. The whole school has embraced a consistent approach and there are increased opportunities to write for a purpose. Writing is celebrated in the school and pupils clearly enjoy writing activities. There are indications in pupils' books and through in-year checks that pupils are making good progress. Now that the firm foundations for higher-quality writing have been established, your plans to explore further ways to extend pupils in English will be valuable in supporting all pupils who can achieve higher standards.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They feel a strong sense of belonging and are eager to say it is an interesting and fun place to be. When talking to the inspector, members of the school council were keen to share their good work. However, it was apparent that other pupils would have liked to have had some responsibility in school. Pupils are eager and willing to make more of a contribution to school life but they are not always being offered these opportunities to develop their potential talents in leadership roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

Wisely reviewing all aspects of safeguarding was one of your first priorities when you joined the school. You and your team have ensured that pupils have a safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding records are kept rigorously, are detailed and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken frequently and is up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Your vigilance regarding the care and support of vulnerable pupils is rigorous.

Pupils are unanimous in saying they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They feel very confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep children safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- It is clear that you are a dedicated leader, whose genuineness and enthusiasm have energised staff, parents and children. You know your school well and have an accurate, honest view of its strengths and priorities. The governors, some of whom have been part of the school for many years, are similarly eager to be progressive and adapt to the changing school. To this end, they make a valuable contribution to the school's drive for further improvement.
- The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength. Your passionate commitment to reducing barriers to learning ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are successful both in their learning and in their personal development.
- The recent changes you have made to the gathering and using of assessment information is strong. Consequently, staff know pupils very well and use assessment to ensure that pupils' needs are identified swiftly. As a result, it is evident that pupils who were behind in their learning are catching up fast. For example, the pupils who did not meet the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 are now making good progress. They are now back on track to meet expected standards for the end of Year 3. Pupils who are still struggling with their learning are identified quickly and benefit from a good-quality personalised approach to support them to catch up quickly.
- Overall, attendance is above national averages and persistent absence for this academic year is low because being in school is valued and good attendance is celebrated. As the number of pupils on roll is low, a prolonged absence can have a significant impact on the school's attendance figures. However, you are quick to tackle any individual pupils' absence where it is not as high as it should be and your systems for monitoring attendance are appropriate.
- There are a number of strengths within the school. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. The care and consideration the older pupils display to younger ones is touching. Pupils talked with pride and affection about these relationships.
- A distinctive feature of your school is the huge range of opportunities and experiences that you offer to pupils, for example whole-school themes such as British Science Week and the Stone Age topic, where pupils made cave paintings, gathered food and built shelters. This is particularly impressive considering the size of your school. Pupils take part in three residential trips during their time in key stage 2, one to the coast, one to the city and one to the countryside. Pupils also have the opportunity to play sports such as lacrosse, fencing and trampolining and to sing in regional events.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to ensure that every pupil achieves all that they are capable of
- pupils are extended and challenged by being offered opportunities to apply their learning and think more deeply about their work

- pupils are offered more chances to take responsibility for their learning and to make a contribution to school life.

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

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior teacher and the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of Cumbria local authority on the telephone. We visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the 24 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of seven parents who talked with me before the school day. I took account of the eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke to staff during the day. I also met with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I looked at school documents including: information about pupils' achievement; your school self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; behaviour and incident logs; and documents relating to safeguarding.