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Mrs Rachael McFarlane
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Dear Mrs McFarlane

Short inspection of Ireleth St Peter's 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created an inclusive culture which has helped to strengthen the school's 'family feel' and its importance to the local community. One pupil summed up the school's ethos when he told me that 'our values are based on respecting others'. Another pupil cited the school's best feature as the many 'friends who care for you'. You have ensured that the school's caring ethos is complemented by high expectations, and members of staff share your unwavering commitment to ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential while at Ireleth St Peter's.

You became headteacher in September 2016 after working at the school as a classroom teacher for a number of years. Since becoming headteacher, you have reinvigorated the school community and driven improvements in many areas. Importantly, you have reversed the school's falling roll, and pupil numbers are due to increase significantly next year. This is because the local community clearly recognises the improvements that you have made. You have also secured nursery provision for the school, which will open in September 2017. Parents, staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. One parent summed up the views of many when they told the inspector, 'I would, and regularly do, highly recommend this lovely school to other parents.'

You and your team have built upon the school's established strengths. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, from eco-club to

dodgeball and drama, to a club which helps pupils to maintain their emotional health and well-being. You have maintained excellent standards of behaviour. Pupils are calm, considerate and determined to make rapid progress in their learning. Pupils confirmed that bullying is exceptionally rare and that the use of derogatory and prejudicial language is almost never heard.

The school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The governors have managed the transition to a new headteacher expertly and they share your determination to improve the school further. Your self-evaluation of the school is accurate and demonstrates that you have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's work. Quite rightly, you have identified the need to further develop the role of middle leaders and you have ensured that subject coordinators receive the training and support that they need to drive improvements across the curriculum. In particular, your team has made significant improvements to the way that pupils are assessed and tracked across the curriculum, and this is helping to ensure that pupils make good progress across a broad range of subjects. You have also identified weaknesses in the school's improvement plan. In particular, you acknowledge that the lack of quantifiable targets makes it difficult for leaders and governors to measure how much progress is being made in different areas.

School leaders have taken effective action to address the areas that were identified as needing improvement at the time of the last inspection. Teachers and other adults now ensure that pupils develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum, particularly in science. This work has helped to ensure that pupils' achievement is particularly strong in mathematics. You have also consciously sought to extend the scope and frequency of partnership work with other schools to ensure that your staff have opportunities to share ideas about teaching and learn from the excellent practice of others. This work with other schools is making a marked contribution to improvements that have been made to teaching. Your predecessor revamped the early years outside learning area, and this has provided children with a broader range of opportunities to consolidate and develop their skills in different settings.

You have an accurate view of what the school needs to do to improve further. You have focused a great deal on improving the teaching of writing, and there is clear evidence to indicate that significant improvements have been made in this important area. The majority of pupils have been inspired to develop a love of writing, and it is clearly evident from pupils' work that they are developing the fluency, detail and technical accuracy of their writing. Despite this, pupils' attainment in writing still lags behind other subjects. As a result, you recognise the need to embed and refine recent improvements to further quicken the progress made by pupils.

Your improvement plan also recognises the need to provide pupils with a greater range of opportunities to learn about world faiths beyond Christianity. You have embarked upon this important journey this year, and all pupils could recall learning about other faiths such as Islam and Judaism. You do, however, recognise the need to extend this work further so that pupils gain a broader understanding of different

faiths. The school also undertakes some strong work to broaden pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, pupils have pen pals in a partner school in Thailand. Despite this, you recognise the need to develop this work further so that pupils develop a rich understanding of the diversity that exists in Britain and beyond.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. You have ensured that all members of staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and are very sensitive to any changes in their mood or presentation. Your team ensures that pupils are supported effectively to keep themselves safe. For example, the school's work on road safety and e-safety is particularly strong, as are the school's efforts to teach pupils how to stay safe when swimming in open water. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are precise and detailed. You employ a number of strategies to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority of paramount importance, and all members of staff subscribe to your mantra: don't think 'what if I'm wrong?'- think 'what if I'm right?'

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key issues to do with the school's effectiveness, such as the impact of leadership and how well pupils are supported to develop the quality of their writing.
- You and your staff are aware of the importance of challenging the most able pupils systematically across the curriculum. Teachers have high expectations of the most able pupils and provide them with work that is matched closely to their abilities. You use the flexibility that is provided by your mixed-age classes to good effect, and the most able pupils are regularly taught alongside older pupils for some or all of their subjects. As a result of this work, the proportion of pupils working at standards above those typically seen for their age is increasing, particularly lower down the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that teaching caters effectively for pupils of different ages and abilities within mixed age-classes. Members of staff know pupils exceptionally well and they ensure that pupils complete work that is matched accurately to their different starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils skilfully to ascertain their understanding and to help them to develop their ideas and understanding. Teachers ensure that good use is made of different resources to support learning and challenge pupils of different abilities. The vast majority of pupils spoken to indicated that they find work challenging but achievable. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils make good progress from their relative starting points.
- Teaching assistants make a particularly strong contribution to supporting learning. They are skilled facilitators of learning and help to ensure that the younger and less able pupils, in particular, make rapid gains in their learning.
- Pupils spoke confidently about the school's work to promote equality. They could

reference recent learning on the negative impact of racism and prejudice against the disabled. They also held positive attitudes about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (LGBT).

- You have ensured that the school's work to promote fundamental British values is sound. In particular, the school's work to promote the importance of democracy is highly effective. The views of pupils are at the heart of decision making at the school. From the naming of the 'mermaid's lookout' (the school's environmentally friendly outside classroom) to the redesign of the school logo and the rewriting of different policies, pupils are taught that they can make a difference to the communities within which they live. The work of the school parliament provides a focal point for developing an understanding of democracy, and a recent mock general election inspired the enthusiastic participation of pupils.
- Pupils could tell the inspector about their learning of different cultures. They were particularly keen to explain what they had learned about life in Ancient Egypt and Nazi Germany. This work is supported effectively by trips and visits to parts of the country that provide a useful contrast to life in rural Cumbria. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have recently been on a residential visit to London. As a result, pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of the diversity that exists within the country. However, you have rightly identified this as an area that requires further development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Measurable targets are contained in the school improvement plan to make it easier for leaders and governors to evaluate how much progress is being made in key areas.
- Recent improvements to the teaching of writing are developed further to support pupils to make even faster progress with their writing.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are broadened further to ensure that pupils develop a rich understanding of the diversity that exists in modern Britain.

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

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with your diocesan consultant and spoke with a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You accompanied me on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. We jointly conducted a formal scrutiny of pupils' work.

I examined a range of documentation, including those relating to safeguarding. I also scrutinised a range of policies, the school improvement plan and the self-evaluation report. I also looked at the school's website.

As part of the inspection, I considered five responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 23 responses to the pupil questionnaire, 30 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, as well as comments received via the free text facility.