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Ms Zena Lines
Headteacher
South Walney Junior School
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Dear Ms Lines

Short inspection of South Walney Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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.

Following your appointment, two years ago, as headteacher at South Walney you formed a new senior leadership team which has maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection. You have led several changes well and maintained high morale throughout. Staff and governors are rightly proud of their school and ambitious for their pupils. These positive views are shared by parents and grandparents. They said that you hold the well-being of each pupil in high regard and have created an environment where pupils can flourish. Because of this, some parents who have moved their children here from other schools wish they had done so sooner. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in high levels of attendance.

At the previous inspection in 2012, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching to raise achievement in mathematics. You have done this by creating more opportunities for real-life problem-solving across a range of subjects. For example, in history pupils used a Venn diagram to provide a clear understanding of the inventions introduced in the Victorian era. This brought the use of numeracy skills to life beyond mathematics lessons. You were also asked to ensure that pupils understand their targets and understand how well they are progressing. Pupils are clear about their individual targets for each subject. They are given precise information on what they need to do to improve their work. This was clearly evident from their corrections and editing of work in their books.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, and your team, ensure that pupils have an extremely safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding records are detailed, reviewed regularly and kept secure. You ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors undertake appropriate training regularly. Your vigilance, and that of your staff, around the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of the highest standard. This is a real strength of your school. This, in part, is due to the trust that parents have in you and your staff to prioritise the safety of their children. Leaders have exceptionally effective relationships with external agencies. These partnerships are instrumental in contributing to the safeguarding of vulnerable pupils in your care.

Pupils say they feel very safe and cared for in school. They feel very confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils of all ages talk with knowledge about ways that they can keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The raft of opportunities for learning beyond the school environment helps pupils to gain experience and awareness of keeping safe beyond the Walney Island community.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused my time on five different aspects. First, I considered why some pupils, especially girls, did not make the progress expected of them in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Following your own evaluation, your relatively new coordinator of mathematics has introduced a new scheme for teaching mathematics. This is now embedded across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have attended bespoke training sessions. There is now a wider range of support for small groups and individuals, including mathematics clinics in the afternoons. This provides early support when additional help is needed. During mathematics lessons, I observed how well all pupils were engaged in learning. I also saw how effectively they were using technology to improve their multiplication skills.
- Current information across all year groups shows that girls and boys alike are making at least expected progress. Some are making better than expected progress. Every opportunity is explored by staff to make learning real. This was evident at breaktime when girls were running the tuck shop. They checked that pupils were given appropriate change for the purchase of their healthy snack. The girls added the money up and told me that they would then go to the local shop to buy more stock in preparation for the next day. Several girls told me how much they enjoyed mathematics. This is a reflection of how well teachers plan engaging opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills. You are mindful that the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth and higher standards still needs to improve. This is particularly the case for pupils of middle ability and those who are the most able. The actions you have put in place are already leading to further improvement.
- The second focus I considered was how well boys are engaging in writing. This is because boys did not progress as well as girls at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. The success of your focus on developing reading for pleasure, particularly with boys, now

has a very positive effect on boys' writing. There are many varied displays around the school to celebrate achievement in writing. There is a Year 6 display illustrating extended pieces of writing relating to crime scenes. This demonstrates how well boys have been captivated by authors of crime stories. Boys and girls alike have planned their own stories using storyboards. Without doubt, all pupils take pride in their work. It is now clear that boys and girls equally make good progress in their writing.

- Third, I focused on the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is because in 2016 too few pupils reached the higher levels. You and senior leaders have effectively addressed this area. For example, you have introduced a daily session to focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling. I observed how your teachers skilfully introduced new vocabulary to Year 5 pupils. I also observed how pupils worked well in pairs to form sentences to demonstrate their comprehension skills. The new marking policy also ensures that across all subjects, teachers and teaching assistants encourage accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. From Year 3, pupils learn how to use different coloured highlighters to check their own work and that of their peers. More pupils are now reaching higher levels in this aspect of their work. As a result, the overall quality of pupils' writing also continues to improve.
- Fourth, I considered whether the curriculum that the school provides is broad and balanced. From our learning walk, it was evident that the creative displays around the school contribute to a vibrant environment. This inspires academic and personal growth in your pupils. The quality of artwork, inspired by numerous artists, ranging from Picasso to Monet and L.S. Lowry, is of a very high standard indeed. Another excellent display in your school showed how Year 3 pupils have created a pneumatic loading shovel using syringes as pistons to operate the loading arm. This was an example of how, through science, technology, engineering and mathematics projects, pupils are given opportunities for experimentation and innovation.
- Extra-curricular provision is also strong. I saw the rehearsal in preparation for the performance of 'Joseph'. This provided me with a clear example of how staff give freely of their time to enrich and enhance the curriculum. At the end of the school day, some boys returned from a cricket match. This was another example of the many and varied extra-curricular activities that many pupils enjoy. The hustings and subsequent voting to coincide with the general election has reinforced the school's focus on British values. Pupils told me they understand the importance of living in a democratic society and respecting those who have different views from them.
- Finally, I wanted to check whether the very high standard of pupils' behaviour reported at the school's previous inspection had been sustained. From the start of the school day, it was apparent to me just how polite and courteous your pupils are towards each other and the adults around them. As we visited each class at the start of the school day, I commented to you on how keen pupils are to learn new things. Pupils demonstrated excellent behaviour. They did this in the registration period, when they watched news clips on national and world events. This high standard of behaviour was also seen in lessons, during breaks and during activities with external visitors. Your pupils are inquisitive and interested in their local environment as well as

those further afield.

- The student council and head and deputy head girls and boys also demonstrate how they take their responsibilities very seriously. They have a desire to represent the views of their peers. Pupils are extremely mindful of those less fortunate than themselves, both in this country and overseas. This results in pupils participating in a raft of charitable activities. Some new pupils started at the school the day before the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is consistency in challenge for the middle ability and most able pupils so that more achieve greater depth and higher standards in mathematics

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team and the chair of the governing body. I also spoke on the telephone to a representative of Cumbria local authority. Together, you and I visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the 31 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire and Ofsted's text messaging service and spoke to parents and grandparents at the start of the school day. I spoke with several staff informally and analysed the eight responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. I also met with a group of pupils at lunchtime and had several informal conversations with pupils during the course of the inspection. 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.