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Mrs Joanne Ormond
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ormond

Short inspection of Maryport C of E Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher are pivotal in continuously improving Maryport Junior School. Since you were appointed as headteacher in January 2016 you have embedded a culture across the school which raises pupils' academic aspirations alongside promoting their physical and emotional well-being. Together with your deputy headteacher you have reformed the many ways in which parents become involved with the school. Parents referred to your 'brilliant leadership' and a 'great learning environment, giving each child a chance to shine'.

You, the deputy headteacher and governors have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas which you are determined to make even better. You regularly analyse pupils' progress and provide help for individuals if their progress falls behind. This support is beneficial in helping pupils to catch up in their learning. Staff support pupils with their social and emotional needs through activities in the rainbow room and this demonstrates how inclusive you are as a school.

At the previous inspection in 2014 inspectors asked the leadership and management, including governors, to tackle with urgency a pattern of staff absences that was affecting the continuity of teaching and pupils' learning. You have achieved a stable staff and all who completed the Ofsted staff survey indicated that morale is high. Staff told me their views are valued and while they have challenging targets to meet, you and the deputy headteacher encourage them to broaden their experience to further their careers. Parents told me: 'Staff are motivated beyond the norm to

provide children with extra-curricular activities and residential opportunities.' These activities clearly broaden pupils' horizons.

Inspectors also asked for improvements in communication with parents, including reassuring them that staff will take prompt and appropriate action when they raise concerns. Parents spoke to me enthusiastically, telling me how they find you and your staff very approachable and that 'Communication with parents is excellent.'

Following a dip in results in 2016, the results of 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading and writing was broadly in line with the national average at the end of key stage 2. Attainment in mathematics was slightly higher. The proportion reaching greater depth in writing was also higher than the national average. However, the proportion reaching higher standards in reading and mathematics was not. You are prioritising this area through a range of strategies identified in your development plan for this academic year.

Teachers demonstrate real enthusiasm for pupils' learning. I was struck by how well pupils behave in lessons and in the playground. They told me that bullying is very rare and if it were to happen, there is always a caring adult to turn to. Behaviour records support this view. Pupils value the way in which staff take their views into account. They make suggestions through members of the active student council which organises events to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have made sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff are clear that keeping pupils safe is everybody's responsibility. Records show that staff quickly identify any concerns, act promptly and make referrals where necessary.

I was satisfied that your procedures and practice are robust. I found that very regular high-quality training takes place. As a result, staff are very well informed about such issues as the prevention of extremism and radicalisation. The checks you make on staff on appointment are thorough. Your record keeping is efficient, organised and regularly reviewed.

Pupils have a particularly good understanding of how to stay safe online and when using social media. They spoke to me knowledgeably about identity theft and about how an online presence can be safely managed.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection I investigated how effectively teachers develop in their pupils a love of reading and reading comprehension skills. This was because the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in 2017 was slightly lower than the national average by the end of Year 6. You and your leadership team have put a number of strategies in place to address this. For example, you have introduced a

whole-school approach to teaching reading. Teachers provide more opportunities for the development of comprehension and inference skills so that more pupils are on track to reach the higher standards by the time they leave school. You have completely refurbished the library in consultation with pupils, their families and staff. This has significantly improved the quantity and quality of books available to pupils. Pupils who met with me showed me their reading records and talked knowledgeably about the importance of reading. They discussed their favourite authors and genres of books that they like to read and told me about book reviews that they have published online.

- Second, I explored how effectively leaders ensure that more pupils, including girls, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, reach higher standards in mathematics. The mathematics leader implemented a whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics just over a year ago. This is proving to be effective. Teachers now focus on pupils explaining their answers in more depth when solving problems. They are beginning to use the mastery approach but this is not fully embedded across all classes. From our visits to mathematics lessons, it was clear how well teachers plan activities for the range of abilities. Evidence in pupils' books and records of pupils' progress show that more pupils, including girls, the disadvantaged and the most able, are being challenged to reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- Next, I investigated the range of opportunities for writing across the curriculum. I wanted to see if the high standards reached in 2017 were being sustained. I observed how effectively teachers motivate pupils to talk extensively and build vocabulary before they embark on writing at length. Progress in pupils' books shows that opportunities for writing in topic work are motivating girls and boys alike. The progress of middle- and higher-ability pupils is quickening. During my meeting with pupils, they told me how much they enjoyed researching aspects of the Tudors, the Romans and the rainforests of South America. Teachers effectively used the Year 5 trip to a wildlife park to allow pupils to interview the park keepers and explore for themselves the characteristics of the tapirs, normally found in Brazil. Pupils are rightly proud of their publication entitled 'Maryport Lighthouse', which is a compilation of pupils' poetry and artwork to celebrate their local heritage. The new curriculum is engaging all groups of pupils with a range of opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- The number of opportunities for learning beyond the normal school day are extensive. Parents commented on how 'staff go above and beyond' to provide a 'wonderful, varied and fun education'. For the last two years, pupils have performed 'Day of the Dead' and 'Wild Swans', which has provided a taste of performing musical theatre on stage. In addition to arranging visits to the local Roman museum, teachers arrange trips to Edinburgh, Manchester and London, which provide a good insight into city life. While pupils show a great deal of respect for those who may have different beliefs and cultures from their own, their knowledge of some religions lacks depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of middle-attaining and most-able pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics
- teachers develop further pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions which may be different from their own so that they are well prepared for life 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

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning alongside the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leader. I analysed 36 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of 31 free-text responses from parents. I held a meeting with pupils and also spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. I reviewed the 46 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and the seven responses to the Ofsted staff survey. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.