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Mrs D Maxwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Maxwell

Short inspection of Kirkbride Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018, 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. You have worked tirelessly, since taking up your post in 2017, to address the areas in school that require further improvement. Governors are supportive and ambitious for the future development of the school. However, they are aware that further training is essential if they are to broaden the level of challenge that they are able to offer the school.

You have a strong and dedicated team. They hold you in very high regard and, like you, are fully committed to providing the very best possible education for pupils at Kirkbride Primary School. One member of staff, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'We all believe in what we are doing. We are valued and are a team.'

Members of staff speak with particular enthusiasm about the broad and balanced curriculum and the wide range of opportunities pupils receive. They also note how subjects link effectively across the curriculum. One teacher noted, 'Bring it together and make it fun.' Teachers build learning around pupils' interests and provide them with a broad array of educational visits to develop further their enthusiasm.

Pupils are proud to attend Kirkbride Primary School and greatly value the many opportunities you provide for them to represent their school, for example as house captains and members of the school council. They are also justly proud of the Gold award that their school received in 2017 for achievement in sport.

At the previous inspection, the inspector reported that the quality of teaching should be improved in order to raise standards, most notably in mathematics. Leaders have undertaken much work in this area, resulting in improvements to the quality of teaching. Subject leaders receive the training necessary to enable them to support teachers in an effective manner. As a result, they are now leading with confidence, most notably in literacy. Assessment systems are effective and ensure that each pupil receives personalised targets. Leaders and other staff share best practice with each other during shared planning time and via peer observations.

Members of staff have received training on providing challenge and fluency in mathematics. They work closely with parents and carers and ensure that pupils practise number skills every day. As a consequence, published information in 2017 shows that pupils' basic mathematical skills in the early years are much improved. Additionally, the school's most recent published performance information relating to the attainment of pupils in key stage 2 shows that performance is broadly in line with that seen nationally in mathematics and in reading and writing. However, we agreed that some staff members still lack confidence when teaching mathematics and do not always provide their pupils with the appropriate resources required to enable them to work efficiently without support from staff members.

The previous inspectors also highlighted that the outdoor provision for children required further development. Leaders and teachers have addressed this issue in a most effective manner. The outdoor area has been greatly improved and is now a rich and stimulating environment for children to learn in. Additionally, the school's parent-teacher association has raised money to build an outdoor structure which is used well to enable children to develop their understanding across a range of subject areas. During the inspection, I observed high levels of engagement and cooperative behaviour in the children. This was due to teachers ensuring that planning of activities in this outdoor area matched the children's needs and challenged their thinking.

During the inspection, we discussed areas where further work is needed to support school improvement. Although much progress has been made in the teaching of mathematics, we agreed that further work is necessary to ensure that teachers provide pupils with the correct resources. This is to ensure that they are able to develop their learning in an independent manner. Additionally, we agreed that the governing body needs to develop their skills so that they feel fully confident in providing other leaders with appropriate support and challenge. Finally, that the school's evaluation and development planning is developed further to ensure that it accurately identifies the main strengths and areas for development of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are of a high standard. Behaviour in classrooms and around school is good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to stay safe both in the real world and online.

Governors and staff understand the role that they play in keeping pupils safe. They

have undertaken a broad range of training in relation to safeguarding and, as a consequence, understand the various signs of abuse and how to report any concerns.

All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that their children felt safe and were well cared for at school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, noted, 'Our children always feel safe and nurtured.'

Inspection findings

- I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry at the start of the inspection. The first of these concerned pupils' progress in phonics. Leaders are aware that there have been fluctuations in results over the last three years. Leaders are addressing this issue by providing teachers and teaching assistants with training on the teaching of phonics. As a result, leaders' monitoring of lessons shows that teachers and teaching assistants have developed in confidence, resulting in well-planned lessons and resources being used effectively to support learning.
- Teachers ensure that phonic skills are taught each day and pupils' needs are addressed well. Leaders have increased the number of adults working alongside pupils to ensure that effective support is provided for pupils who are not reaching their targets. Parents receive training to aid them in supporting their children with phonics at home. Responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, show that this has been greatly appreciated by many parents. You are justly proud of the success of this work. The number of pupils achieving the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2017 was above that seen nationally. Additionally, the school's own performance information shows that the number of pupils who are working at the standard expected for their age is increasing considerably.
- Leaders are proud of the progress that pupils make in reading. The school's most recent published performance information for pupils at the end of key stage 2 shows that pupils are making a level of progress which is well above that seen nationally. However, you are aware that the attainment of some of the middle-ability pupils at key stage 1 is not as strong, with results being lower than those seen nationally in 2017. Leaders ensure that the school's assessment system quickly identifies these pupils. Teachers then provide the pupils with individualised reading programmes to bridge the gaps in their learning.
- Teachers work closely with parents, offering them strategies to support their children's reading skills at home. For example, teachers place reading prompts in the books that pupils take home. You are very proud of the new library that leaders have introduced into the school. It is bright and engaging, enabling pupils to read books across a wide range of topics. As a consequence of this focused approach, your school's detailed data analysis highlights that middle-ability pupils are making accelerated progress and the gap between them and their peers is narrowing.
- Key stage 2 published data for 2017 shows that pupils perform in line with other pupils nationally in grammar and punctuation at the expected levels. However, at the higher levels their performance is lower than that seen nationally. Leaders

are addressing this issue in an effective manner. Teachers have ensured that the planning for grammar and punctuation has been improved and that grammar and punctuation are taught through many subjects across the curriculum. As a consequence, the school's own assessment and tracking system shows that the number of pupils who are currently working at the higher standard has increased considerably.

- You are developing a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development since joining the school as headteacher in 2017. However, some aspects of your school's self-evaluation are unclear and, as a consequence, leaders and governors are not able to check effectively that their actions are having the desired impact. Similarly, your school development plan, while identifying the areas requiring further improvement in the school, also includes a great deal of information which detracts from the school's main priorities. We agreed that work is needed to strengthen these documents to ensure that actions are clear and have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- You have extended, most effectively, a broad and exciting array of learning experiences in school for children in the early years and throughout key stage 1. Each area is exceptionally well resourced, engaging and exciting. You offer opportunities for the older pupils in key stage 1 to work alongside the younger ones – thus supporting the learning of all involved. Pupils are particularly proud of this work and point out the importance of being a good role model. One pupil noted, 'I'm proud of improving the school – making it a happier place.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors develop a broader range of skills to enable them to provide increased support for the headteacher and other leaders
- the school's self-evaluation and development planning accurately and concisely reference the school's strengths and areas for development
- pupils receive regular opportunities to undertake independent activities and problem-solving in mathematics, using a broad range of equipment suitable for the task.

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

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governors. I spoke with the leaders for English and mathematics. I also spoke with a local authority general adviser. I had formal discussions with a group of pupils and members of staff. I met with your school secretary in relation to safeguarding.

Accompanied by you, I visited all year groups in the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and assessment information. I took account of the 40 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.