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Dear Mrs Curry

Short inspection of Cockwood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Your dedicated leadership inspires trust and confidence in the school community and engenders enthusiastic staff teamwork. Leaders have developed highly productive relationships with other schools, including enlisting support to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders. Teachers have embraced this culture of continuous improvement and welcome coaching alongside their colleagues as a professional opportunity. Consequently, staff morale is very high.

The school's caring ethos ensures that pupils are very well looked after. Pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum, which promotes the good development of reading, writing and mathematical skills across all subjects. Teachers effectively deploy support staff, and this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teaching assistants have a good level of knowledge that ensures that they provide pupils with appropriate support and encouragement. Teaching assistants work especially well with groups of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to help them make faster progress. This is particularly noticeable in the teaching of mathematics. For example, pupils are routinely provided with additional practical resources, such as 'stacking cubes', to help them to separate numbers into tens and ones.

The 2017 national curriculum assessments at key stage 2 show that pupils in Year 6

made progress in reading, in writing and in mathematics at least in line with all pupils nationally. This prepared them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils' progress in writing was particularly strong, being significantly above the national average. In 2017, achievement was also strong in key stage 1, and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was higher than the national figure. There was also a marked rise in the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year to well above the national figure. This demonstrates that current pupils have a secure platform on which to develop further.

You have addressed the development points from the previous inspection. The senior leadership team and governors have high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders have made significant improvements to the teaching of writing. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 shows that they are making the same strong progress as the previous cohort. Pupils have regular opportunities to write for purpose; for example, pupils perfect their skills in letter writing in history lessons. The older pupils, for example, produced high-quality writing about the history of Concorde and its impact on the aerospace industry. Pupils express their ideas well and use a good range of vocabulary. This approach has strengthened teaching and resulted in a more precise focus on including literacy in other subjects, such as science and geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained. They confidently use the school's robust procedures for reporting any concerns they may have. Governors are closely involved with this element of the school's work because they are highly committed in their roles. This is demonstrated in the annual safeguarding letter written by the safeguarding governor and produced for parents and carers to highlight the importance of keeping children safe and to inform them of the school's actions in this regard.

Pupils said that they trust staff and know what to do to stay safe, including when working online. They enjoy coming to school and have confidence in the staff to look after them. Pupils reported that there is very little bullying of any sort in school, but that any disputes that arise are dealt with effectively by school staff.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the first line of enquiry would evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on improving standards in mathematics across the school.
- Leaders rightly explored why the 2017 standards achieved by pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were lower than in reading and writing. The mathematics subject leader has collaborated with local teaching schools to research and find new information on how to help pupils learn successfully. This has led to the school adopting new, effective strategies that are raising standards across the school. The school's assessment information now demonstrates that most pupils are making accelerated progress in mathematics. More than three

quarters of current Year 6 pupils are working at the expected standard or higher. However, some pupils' understanding of problem solving is less secure, especially when investigating complex number facts.

- Historically, too few pupils made strong enough progress across key stage 1 to achieve the higher standard in mathematics. This trend is changing. Progress in mathematics across key stage 1 is now rapid for the most able. Other pupils, whatever their level of ability, are also making good progress towards achieving the expected standard by the end of Year 2. Pupils in Year 2 count confidently, recognise fractions and use mathematical vocabulary correctly. The teaching of problem-solving skills in mathematics particularly engages the most able pupils in Year 1, because they are expected to justify their answers and find things out for themselves.
- The next key line of enquiry focused on the impact of teachers' actions to ensure that pupils in key stage 2 are writing at greater depth and at length across the curriculum.
- Writing in pupils' books shows that they acquire skills and knowledge appropriate to their ability across their different subjects. Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to apply technical writing skills, such as the application of spelling and grammar rules. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of story structure particularly well. The quality of writing of the most able pupils is characterised by fluency, sophisticated vocabulary and spelling accuracy. This is also evident in their history books through highly creative letter writing to a Stone Age pen pal. However, you agree that some aspects of writing development could be strengthened further, for example by ensuring that pupils in key stage 2 are more accurate in their handwriting.
- Pupils learn to write in different forms, such as reports and diary entries. A particular strength in key stage 2 is the way pupils are inspired to think deeply about their learning before writing. Pupils develop resilience because of the way they are encouraged to approach writing about problems and dilemmas. Consequently, they develop enquiring minds. Pupils enthusiastically respond to thought-provoking questions such as, 'What is Lady Justice and what does she represent?' Pupils learn how to structure their writing correctly through appropriate editing and use a wide range of research resources to enable them to write a convincing report.
- My final line of enquiry focused on provision for writing in the early years. I reviewed how the most able children are challenged to achieve well in writing and investigated how many children currently are showing greater understanding and skill in this subject.
- Most children, when they join Reception, arrive at the school working at levels that are typical for their age. However, the early years leader has rightly identified communication and language as barriers to progress and attainment in writing for some pupils. The curriculum has been adapted to give more time to talking and writing, and staff monitor closely how well children use phonics in their writing. These new initiatives have yet to be fully reviewed to evaluate their impact. Consequently, there are children in the early years who do not have the precise skills in writing to match the high standards of which they are capable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 2 are well prepared to solve problems in mathematics
- they improve the rates of progress for most-able children in the early years to ensure that their attainment in writing aligns with the high standards of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, three members of staff and a group of pupils from across the school to discuss their work and gain their views of what it is like to be a pupil at Cockwood Primary school. I spoke with a representative from the governing body. I accompanied you on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I considered the 43 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, together with responses to discussions with pupils and staff. I evaluated the robustness of your single central record and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment procedures.