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18 April 2018

Mrs Lisa Fell  
Headteacher  
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Cumbria  
LA13 0LT

Dear Mrs Fell

### **Short inspection of Newton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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.

Newton Primary School is a thriving school where every child really does matter. Your philosophy that the school should be 'a place to smile' permeates the very fabric of the building. Your pupils are testimony to this mission and vision in action. They are polite, friendly, courteous pupils who are proud of their school. They are equally proud of their teachers and their local community. Without doubt, this is a school that nurtures each pupil. It is a school that is characterised by strong relationships and a tangible sense of inclusivity.

This is a school of choice for many parents and carers. This is because you and your staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils who have more complex needs. Nearly two-fifths of the school's pupils have additional needs. For example, pupils who have struggled to settle in other schools thrive at Newton Primary School. In addition, you cater very well for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The pupils with whom I spoke told me how happy they are at your school. Several of them said that they are made to feel valued here and that they have now started to learn because of the support given to them by staff.

Since the previous inspection, you and your governing body have worked hard to address the key areas for improvement. For example, the governing body now has a sharp focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Governors have a much stronger

understanding of the information available to them about pupils' learning and progress on which they can hold you and your leadership team to account. A recently appointed chair of governors ably leads the governing body. Governors have undertaken a wide range of additional training to ensure that they have the necessary skills and aptitudes to fulfil their statutory duties. Governors are committed to realising the key priorities outlined in your school improvement plans. They hold leaders at all levels to account for the quality of pupils' learning.

Following the last inspection, alongside your governing body, you have also continued to improve teaching and learning across the school. Parents have recognised the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and many have moved their children into the school part-way through different year groups. For example, the majority of the pupils in last year's Year 6 joined the school during key stage 2. Without doubt, this had an effect on their progress by the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics and writing. Pupils said that, from the point when they joined the school, they achieved well and were well prepared to move to secondary school.

Since the school population in early years, key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 has now stabilised, teachers have been able to raise their expectations of pupils significantly. This is because pupils are fully settled into the school and its routines. It is also because the school's strategies to address pupils' barriers to learning are effective. There is strong evidence that current pupils are making good progress right across the school because of the wrap-around care that you and your staff provide for them. Pupils also value the information and advice that staff give them on the next steps in their learning.

Added to this wrap-around care, your teachers and other adults ensure that they increasingly prepare activities that meet pupils' needs. Nevertheless, you acknowledge that you have to increase the level of challenge further so that more pupils achieve a higher standard across their subjects by the end of key stage 2. For example, you accept that you have to develop pupils' confidence and resilience to tackle more complex, unfamiliar problems in mathematics. While pupils attain well in this subject and most pupils make good progress, too few pupils excel and reach the higher standard at key stages 1 and 2.

Another key area for improvement is pupils' progress in writing. While there are strong and sustained signs of improvement in pupils' writing skills across the school, pupils do not make the same high rates of progress in writing as they do in reading. Nonetheless, you have comprehensive and effective plans in place to improve this aspect of your work further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A strong culture of safeguarding pervades the school. The leadership team ensures that all the required checks are undertaken to make sure that staff are suitable to work with pupils. Appropriate senior staff and governors have undertaken safer recruitment training. You and your governing body regularly review the site to

ensure that it is safe and that control measures and risk assessments are effective.

Pupils said that they feel very safe in the school and in your care. There is very little bullying. On the rare occasion when it does occur, teachers are highly effective in addressing issues. Parents are unreservedly positive about the work that you do to keep their children safe. Added to this, the pastoral support afforded to pupils and their families is excellent. Several parents commented on how you have helped them to address family issues. Pupils and parents particularly value the work that you do to support the safe use of technology.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils make very strong progress in reading right across the school. By the end of key stage 1, pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress is well above the national average.
- Leaders have taken effective steps to improve pupils' progress in mathematics to match the progress that pupils make in reading. Current pupils' work shows that they make secure progress over time. However, there are more opportunities to challenge pupils to excel by designing more complex problem-solving activities that stretch their thinking.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in writing is the weaker area. Nonetheless, leaders have effective plans in place to improve pupils' achievement. Leaders' actions have led to demonstrable improvements to current pupils' work. It is clear from pupils' writing that they are making much better progress. Pupils now use much more sophisticated vocabulary, and teachers give them plentiful opportunities to write at length. Leaders' strategies to find the 'hooks' to inspire pupils to write are paying dividends. Leaders acknowledge that there is still some way to go before outcomes in writing match the very strong progress seen in reading.
- A significant proportion of the school's pupils has identified needs or is in receipt of early help. These pupils often join the school at different times of the year because their needs have not been adequately met in other schools. Newton Primary School has a strong reputation within the local community for re-engaging pupils in learning, for example those pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. It is also highly valued by educational professionals who testify to how well pupils settle into the school and progress in their learning.
- Leaders are also very effective in addressing pupils' specific barriers to learning. The tracking of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Leaders and teachers use their tracking information effectively to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions to support these more vulnerable pupils. Leaders and teachers deploy other adults effectively to meet pupils' needs. Staff receive regular training to improve their strategies to meet the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders have effective systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality. Since the previous inspection, leaders have stemmed the decline in

pupils' rates of attendance. They have ensured that the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also decreased. This year, pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average and only a handful of pupils have attendance below 90%.

- Governors receive regular information about how effective leaders' actions are to improve pupils' attendance at school. Leaders work effectively with vulnerable pupils and their families to ensure that they come to school. Leaders have had a significantly positive effect on improving punctuality. This is a considerable achievement, as the school is isolated from any public transport links.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- match the excellent wrap-around pastoral care on offer to pupils with consistently high levels of challenge, so that more pupils achieve a higher standard across their subjects by the end of key stage 2
- further improve pupils' progress in writing across the school to match that of reading
- ensure that pupils have the opportunities to tackle more complex, unfamiliar problems 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

Jonathan Smart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team and the subject leader for mathematics. In addition, I met with teachers from across the school. I met parents and four members of the governing body. I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with others around the school and in lessons. Furthermore, I observed teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 and visited the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance information, pupils' assessment information, a range of policies, your evaluation of how well the school is performing and your school improvement plan. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and a number of free-text comments. I also took into account 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 29 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.