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Miss Sarah Watson
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Dear Miss Watson

Short inspection of Warton Archbishop Hutton's VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment last year, you have been unwavering in your drive to improve standards across the school. You have a steely determination to ensure that the school is as effective as possible. Your honest and forthright approach is valued by the whole school community.

You acknowledge that although you have worked extremely hard to halt the decline in standards, there is still work to be done to further improve outcomes, particularly in key stage 2. In addition, we agreed that some aspects of the curriculum such as history and geography are not taught in as much depth as necessary.

Staff have responded wholeheartedly to the changes you have already made. You insist on high expectations for all and you know pupils are capable of achieving the high standards you expect. However, some changes have been hampered by changes to the teaching staff, particularly in key stage 2. You have plans to have a more stable staff in September, and a successful recruitment process is almost complete.

The pupils in the school are an absolute delight. They are articulate, well mannered and polite. They very much enjoy coming to school, and attendance levels are high.

Pupils said that behaviour is very positive. They said that bullying is rare and, if it does occur, 'teachers sort it quickly'. Pupils particularly like the new behaviour system that you introduced. It is clearly understood and pupils look forward to the celebration assembly, in which good behaviour is rewarded.

Pupils appreciate the work of all adults in school and the opportunities that pupils are given. You have introduced a number of trips and visits to enhance the pupils' learning. Pupils talked enthusiastically about visits to Grizedale and Borwick Hall. The school environment is a purposeful and attractive setting. Pupils have access to a running track that they use regularly and they have access to high-quality sports coaching. They can access sports such as athletics, tennis and golf. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle extremely well.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly appreciative of the changes you have put in place since your arrival. They said that pupils are safe and they particularly value the improvements in communication you have introduced. They find you both accessible and approachable. A typical comment was, 'The headteacher has made a massive difference in all aspects and I feel the school is now a positive place.'

You have valued the support given to you by the local authority. This support has been particularly effective in ensuring that the school has permanent leadership and in providing training for teachers, which has led to improvements in teaching, particularly in key stage 1 and early years.

In the previous inspection, inspectors noted that teachers should set work that is challenging, especially for the most able pupils. Teachers in early years and key stage 1 have risen to this challenge and now have much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers ask thought-provoking questions and give pupils clear advice about how to improve their work. However, lack of stability in staffing in key stage 2 has meant that not all pupils are challenged as well as they could be. Furthermore, the uncertainties around staffing have also meant that there have been few opportunities for teachers to observe each other, as the inspectors previously recommended. You have clear plans to address these issues with your newly appointed deputy headteacher.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since your appointment, you have transformed the safeguarding procedures in school. Policies and procedures are robust, and there is a systematic process for reporting any concerns staff have about pupils. You have taken steps to ensure that staff have received the appropriate training in how to safeguard pupils. All appropriate checks are carried out on new members of staff to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children, and these are recorded appropriately.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They know there is always someone they can talk to if they have worries or concerns. They know how to keep themselves safe, including while on school trips and when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed a number of lines of enquiry. The first looked at the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2. You fully recognised the need to improve the teaching of mathematics after disappointing test results in 2017. Staff have had a range of training to address the weaknesses in mathematics teaching. This training has been most successful in key stage 1, where pupils are given opportunities to reason and problem solve with numbers. As a result, teaching is engaging and progress is strong. However, changes in staffing during the academic year mean that there are inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2. Expectations about what pupils can achieve are variable. Progress has therefore slowed for some pupils.
- We looked at the teaching of writing across the school. The teaching of writing in early years and key stage 1 is highly effective. Teachers have very high expectations, and they make sure that pupils are exposed to rich vocabulary and high-quality books to develop pupils' writing. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 were describing animals and were keen to tell me the words that they were using, which were of a high quality. However, in key stage 2 the picture is less rosy. Again, changes in staffing mean that expectations are varied. Teachers do not always pick up basic mistakes or insist that they are corrected. As a result, progress in some classes has stalled, which means that not enough pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard. You are already taking actions that are making positive changes. These include deploying a teacher from key stage 1 to teach writing skills in Year 6.
- We looked at provision in early years where children get off to a good start. Parents are appreciative and supportive, which ensures that relationships between school and home are strong. The environment is rich and engaging and children are extremely keen to learn. For example, during the inspection, they were all excited to talk about the life cycle of a frog and a butterfly. They were able to use a range of vocabulary such as 'chrysalis' and 'froglet'. Children enjoy learning outside, but you are aware that this area does not offer as many exciting opportunities as the inside so you have plans in place to develop this area. Assessments are accurate, and an increasing number of pupils are achieving a good level of development each year.
- Together, we looked at pupils' books, and it was evident that some pupils in certain classes are not getting enough opportunities to study all subjects in sufficient depth, particularly in some aspects of history and geography. However, where the wider curriculum is taught well, pupils have delighted in learning about subjects such as the First World War and the Romans. The curriculum is often enhanced by visits and visitors. For example, in Year 4 and Year 5, pupils enjoyed learning about a man from Warton who won the Victoria Cross and their subsequent visit to Lancaster to see the medal. You have begun to implement new curriculum plans that ensure that pupils in all classes are taught a range of subjects that develop their skills and knowledge.
- Finally, we looked at the systems you have to assess and track the progress of pupils across the school. The system that you have introduced is extremely robust and it allows teachers to quickly identify when pupils are falling behind.

This means that in key stage 1 expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised and progress is accelerated. Because staffing is inconsistent in key stage 2, the impact has been less powerful. Teachers are aware of who is falling behind, but they do not always respond quickly enough and, as a result, progress is not as strong.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 2 have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenge pupils with work that accelerates their progress, particularly in writing and mathematics
- every aspect of the national curriculum, particularly history and geography, is taught consistently and effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I talked with pupils in a meeting and in class.

I took account of 32 responses to the online questionnaires for parents, Parent View, and three responses to the survey for staff. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.