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Mrs Sarah Jardine  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Jardine

### **Short inspection of Oughterside Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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 September 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You continue to be an inspirational headteacher who leads by example in the many and varied roles, including being an associate adviser for the local authority and supporting a headteacher of another school. You and the senior teacher ensure that staff morale is high by valuing all that they do and making sure that everyone works together as a team. You state on the website that you and the staff 'seek to create a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations', and you certainly do.

You, the senior teacher and governors, have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. You ensure that the school improvement plan includes precise actions to so that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, and for life generally. Your leadership and the school's reputation are highly regarded among the local community and beyond. As a result, the number of pupils on roll has trebled in size since the previous inspection. Several parents and carers told me that they travel many miles so their children can attend this school, which parents also describe as 'a second family' for their children.

At the previous inspection in 2013, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to continue to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in English and mathematics. You were asked to do this by increasing teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and making sure pupils move on more quickly with their learning. From our observations of learning, it was evident that teachers plan activities to meet the wide range of abilities of pupils in each class.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and, when necessary, quickly adapt work so that pupils are constantly being challenged to reach their potential. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils take pride in their work and make good progress.

You were also asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical and literacy skills to real-life situations. We observed how skilfully teachers used data from football matches for pupils to work out the mean, median and mode of activities of mid-fielders, forwards and goal scorers. This brought learning to life. Pupils considered how commentators use this sort of information when reporting on matches and players. Together, we also observed pupils taking on the role of a mammal when writing a letter to humans. They eagerly explained how they felt about swimming among all the litter in the ocean. They were clearly enjoying their work and making good progress with their letter-writing skills, while securing their knowledge of worldwide environmental issues.

Inspectors also asked you to ensure that teachers have more opportunities to learn from outstanding practice in other schools. You ensure that there are many opportunities to share best practice, both across and beyond the school. Staff appreciate the range of opportunities available to them to develop their skills both within school and through the local cluster of schools. This helps staff to reflect on and improve their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching over time is never less than good and often better. In addition, you and your senior teacher have considerable expertise and work with teachers in other schools to improve their practice.

You and the staff ensure that children get off to a good start in early years. Many children have skills that are lower than you would expect for their age, particularly in speech and language. However, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the national average in 2016 and even better in 2017. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards by the end of key stage 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, was higher than the national average in 2017. Similarly, those reaching higher standards in each of these subjects was also above the national average.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and love learning. They demonstrate a real keenness to find out new things and take pride in their work. Their relationships with each other, staff and visitors to Oughterside lead to a harmonious learning community.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection it was clear for me to see the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high

profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date, so they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the deputy designated safeguarding leaders are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you diligently follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and the staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

## **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how effectively you and the staff are taking action to improve outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You have a phonics scheme and a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in early years, key stage 1 and, when necessary, for older pupils. Staff have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to teach phonics and reading effectively. Leaders regularly analyse information to identify any pupils who are struggling. They act swiftly to ensure that pupils receive help to catch up quickly. As a result, pupils' outcomes in phonics are now stronger than previously. Teachers' and teaching assistants' enthusiasm for phonics is infectious. However, teachers' planning for the range of abilities in the Nursery group does not always maximise children's learning. Currently, teachers do not consistently ensure pupils' accurate pronunciation of letters and their sounds in key stage 1.
- You ensure that the curriculum offers an extensive range of learning experiences, including visits to towns, cities and to the theatre. Teachers give freely of their time to organise residential visits to outdoor-education centres. Pupils told me how much they enjoy exploring places different to their local community. You and leaders ensure that all aspects of the primary curriculum are covered and there is an appropriate balance between subjects. A raft of extra-curricular activities, such as sports, colouring and cinema club, take place after school and these supplement and extend pupils' learning. Teachers ensure that topics are used to link subjects together and bring learning to life. You and the staff are highly skilled in finding ways to motivate pupils. This includes visiting speakers, such as British mountaineer Chris Bonington, who have a real impact on raising the aspirations of pupils. While pupils learn about the range of cultures and faiths practised in Britain today, their knowledge and understanding lacks depth. Work in pupils' books illustrates that the new handwriting scheme introduced this year is not fully embedded across all subjects.
- With the significant growth in the number of pupils on roll since the previous inspection, I was keen to know how you and the staff support pupils who join the school during key stage 1 or key stage 2. I spoke with several pupils who joined the school during key stage 2 and there is no doubt that when they arrive they are immediately made to feel welcome by staff and pupils alike. You ensure that teachers receive information from previous schools and from parents to help to provide the appropriate level of support, both academically and emotionally. This leads to pupils settling in very well from the outset. You provide governors with detailed information about pupils who have attended school from the start of

their school life compared to those who join at a later date. All pupils make at least good progress while at Oughterside.

- Finally, I was very taken with the behaviour of pupils. They are a credit to the school in the way in which they show a deep level of respect towards each other, the adults around them and to visitors to the school. You, the senior teacher and staff team go to great lengths to identify and reduce any barriers to learning. I was interested to look at what you are doing to reduce persistent absences even further, as although lower than 2016, in 2017 the numbers were still higher than the national average. From the evidence I gathered, it is clear that you, the office manager and staff go to great lengths to encourage pupils' punctuality and attendance. However, a very small minority of parents continue to take their children on holiday during term time. In this relatively small school such absences disproportionately affect overall attendance figures.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics for the Nursery children is appropriate for the range of abilities
- staff give enough time for pupils to be secure in their pronunciation of letters and sounds in phonics sessions
- teachers implement the new handwriting scheme across all subjects
- teachers develop further pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions which may differ from their own, so they are even better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, we jointly observed teaching and learning. I held meetings with subject leaders, members of the governing body and with you in the role of designated safeguarding leader. I analysed 10 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 five free-text responses from parents. I analysed the four staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke

informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. 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; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; pupils' work and their reading logs.