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Mrs Avril Spencer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Spencer

Short inspection of Seascale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 April 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 and the staff continue to provide a vibrant learning environment which pupils clearly enjoy. Parents and carers commented that 'teachers regularly go the extra mile for all of the children'.

You, leaders and the governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. Together, you are determined to improve the school further. You have high expectations of what you and the staff can achieve, while being mindful and realistic about staff workloads. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to improve teaching further and strengthen pupils' progress. You were asked to do this by ensuring that teachers quickly adapt activities when pupils find the work easy to ensure that they are always fully challenged. During our learning walk, it was evident that teachers plan activities to meet the range of needs of pupils in each class. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants. Together, they provide bespoke support when needed, both for those pupils who have fallen behind with their learning and those who need higher levels of challenge. It was also clear from pupils' books that teachers ensure that pupils make good progress during their time at the school.

Inspectors also asked you to improve the use of pupils' reading logs so pupils, parents and teachers are better informed of the progress made at home and in

school. This is clearly happening for the vast majority of pupils through the pupils' planners. However, it is evident that a small minority of parents do not regularly listen to their children reading at home. Staff do all they can to compensate for this.

The inspection team also asked you to further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by developing the skills of relatively new middle leaders in measuring pupils' progress. There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection, including your appointment as headteacher. There have also been some changes in middle and subject leadership. You and the leaders compile a range of data about all aspects of the school, which clearly demonstrates how well leaders and managers are monitoring pupils' progress. This is used to implement support for pupils who need additional help. You and leaders provide governors with a raft of information from which they can support and challenge you and the staff.

You and the staff continue to ensure that children get off to a good start in the early years. Parents told me how happily their children settled into the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff ensure thorough transition arrangements into the school, which help pupils to settle quickly into their learning.

Since the previous inspection, you and the leadership team have led improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage improved to be in line with that seen nationally in 2017. Unvalidated data published on the day of the inspection demonstrates good progress is being sustained for current Year 6 pupils. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education because they develop a strong work ethic during their time at Seascale.

Pupils take pride in their work and in their school. They particularly enjoy learning beyond their local community, for example through residential trips to York and Bradford. They told me how much they value the range of after-school clubs. This was reiterated by parents who told me that 'children can explore their own interests and develop new passions, be it for the environment, sport, music or drama, which is wonderful and makes this school special.'

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, office staff demonstrated vigilance in checking the identity of visitors. The office manager provided a brief outline of safeguarding procedures and the systems to follow in case of an emergency. Because the school is located on the border of a nuclear power plant, you systematically carry out unannounced lock-down drills with pupils and staff each term, in case of a possible risk from this facility or any other similar emergency.

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 leader 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 invested in a phonics scheme which provides a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in the early years, key stage 1 and, when necessary, for older pupils. The leader who has responsibility for reading throughout the school ensures that 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. Pupils' attainment in phonics is improving year on year. In early years, children were very excited to repeat after the teacher 'I, I fly high' with actions. Teachers used this activity to reinforce the learning of the sound 'igh' which children then neatly wrote on their individual whiteboards. The teaching of phonics is closely linked to improving writing and spelling, and this is evident from pupils' work over time.
- I also explored the opportunities that you and the staff provide to develop a culture of reading for pleasure across the school, particularly for boys and the most able pupils. We visited the breakfast reading club prior to the start of the school day. It was well attended, and the teaching assistant's storytelling skills had pupils spellbound. A couple of Year 6 pupils even chose to delay reading their own books because they too found the storyline fascinating. Although the reading club is open to any pupils, teachers invite specific pupils to attend if there is evidence that they are not frequently reading at home. Teachers and teaching assistants encourage parents to attend workshops on how they can support reading with their children at home. Despite this, a small minority of parents remain reluctant to listen to their children read at home. This slows pupils' progress.
- You recently instigated the overhaul of the library, investing in new books and the way in which pupils can more easily access books which are appropriate to their stage of reading. Teachers use the current international football matches to promote 'The World Cup of Books' initiative. This has captivated the imagination of boys and girls alike, who are reading fiction and non-fiction books based on football. This is followed by pupils writing an online review of books they have read and regularly analysing which books are the most popular. Teachers have clearly captured pupils' imaginations, and this is promoting discussions among

boys and girls about the books they are reading. The reading action group of volunteer pupils, with the support of a teaching assistant, actively look at ways to promote reading across the school. This group takes responsibility to raise the profile of reading for pleasure in every key stage. Many new initiatives to promote reading now need embedding and developing further. While these have achieved some success, there is still scope to further increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standard in reading by the end of Year 6.

- Next, I explored the strategies that leaders and managers use to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics, particularly across key stage 2. Since the previous inspection, a new mathematics leader has recently implemented a new whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics. Leaders frequently check that teachers plan activities effectively for the range of abilities in their class using this new approach. Through observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books, leaders are supporting teachers to focus more on challenging the middle- and most able pupils to develop their reasoning skills to reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6. Currently, there are still some shortcomings in pupils' ability to solve more complex mathematical problems and to verbally explain why an answer may be right or wrong. You and the leadership team remain focused on increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Finally, I explored the high rate of girls' absence in the last two years and what you are doing to promote high levels of attendance. You provided me with evidence of strong analysis of the information on absences and action taken to improve attendance. You follow up in detail those pupils who are late, occasionally absent or persistently absent. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and this supports progress with their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on strategies to work with the few parents who need to develop their confidence and skills to help their children develop a love of reading beyond school
- staff embed and develop new initiatives to develop a love of reading across the school
- teachers use the relatively new approach for teaching mathematics to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.

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, the inspector and the headteacher 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 41 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 33 free-text responses from parents. I analysed the 21 staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke with several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. I reviewed the three responses to the pupils' questionnaire and 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 planners.