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Mr Martin Henderson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Henderson

### **Short inspection of Westmorland Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 February 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 continue to be an inspirational headteacher who leads by example in your many and varied roles, including supporting schools across the local authority through leading the behaviour improvement programme. You and your senior leaders ensure that staff morale is high by valuing all that the staff do and making sure that everyone works together as a team. You have high expectations of pupils and staff alike, and help them to reach their full potential. You state on your website that you 'aim to inspire the brightest future for all', and you certainly do.

You, your leadership team and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. The school improvement plan identifies precise aspects needing attention and actions to resolve them. You have made several changes to how reading is taught and acknowledge the need to embed these changes. Leaders have identified that further work is needed in developing pupils' writing skills in phonics sessions. Staff work with parents to explore how reading with pupils at home can be developed and how attendance can be improved. This leads to continuing improvement, good teaching and progress, all of which make sure that all pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, and for life generally.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team, including

governors, to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement. You ensure that expertise is shared both across and beyond the school. You and members of the leadership team have considerable expertise and work with teachers and teaching assistants at Westmorland and in other schools to improve their practice. As a result, teaching is never less than good, and often better.

You place a high priority on training to keep your staff up to date. You have made careful new appointments to strengthen staff expertise. Teachers provide bespoke challenges for individual pupils and records of pupils' progress are accurate and detailed. This has led to a rise in the achievement of all groups of pupils as they move through the school.

Inspectors also asked you to improve the quality of pupils' writing by ensuring that pupils know how to use grammar, punctuation and spelling correctly, and always write and present their work neatly. Evidence in pupils' books and work on display around the school demonstrate the high expectations that teachers have of pupils. Pupils respond well by taking a great deal of pride in their work. Teachers thoughtfully plan grammar, punctuation and spelling sessions which have a positive impact on pupils' accuracy when writing across a range of subjects. As a result, progress is good.

You and your staff ensure that children get off to a good start in the early years. Many children start school with skills that are much lower than is typical for their age, particularly in speech and language and their personal development. They make good progress throughout each key stage, and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

It was evident during the inspection, and from talking to pupils and their families, just how much pupils enjoy coming to school and learning. Parents told me how effectively the 'brilliant staff team' boosts the confidence of pupils and builds their resilience in regard to learning, and life generally. You ensure that pupils benefit from a totally dedicated staff team which provides high levels of pastoral support and academic challenge. As a result, pupils aspire to work as vets, nurses, police officers and in many other professional lines of work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The safeguarding manager, designated safeguarding leaders and senior learning mentors make sure that staff fully understand their duties 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. Close scrutiny is given to visitors to the school. You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. Staff attend regular, up-to-date training, so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the safeguarding team 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 in order to secure expertise to support

pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You, your safeguarding and pastoral teams and all staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families.

## **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I focused on several agreed key aspects. We looked at how effectively you and your staff are taking action to improve outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You have a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in early years, key stage 1 and, when necessary, for older pupils. The leaders who have responsibility for reading throughout the school ensure that staff have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to teach phonics and reading effectively. Your early years leader is also working with the private provider of pre-school childcare to encourage the learning of letters and sounds from a very early age. 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 strong. Teachers' and teaching assistants' enthusiasm for phonics is infectious. In early years, we observed a small group of children learning the 'ar' sound. They were highly engaged in repeating a range of words after the teacher. The teacher then encouraged the children to write the 'ar' letters. At times, expectations of writing in these sessions are not high enough and resources do not encourage pupils to write neatly.
- You and your staff have rightly focused on nurturing a love of reading in the early years. Together, staff have developed a culture that promotes the excitement and anticipation that comes with reading a book. Towards the close of the school day, I observed skilful storytelling in early years that captured the imaginations of children. A short way into a story, a teacher asked the children why Elmer the elephant, might be crying. Children willingly offered a range of reasons which demonstrated that they were using their imaginations and that they were absorbed in the storyline. Pupils now make good progress with their reading in early years. Parents told me how well staff provide opportunities for them to learn how to continue children's learning at home. However, there are a small minority of parents who lack the confidence to read at home with their children.
- We looked at how you have improved the way that reading is taught across the school. You have ensured that teachers have the correct skills and knowledge to use assessment information accurately in order to build effectively on what pupils already know. As a result, learning activities now accurately match the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to extend their vocabulary through well-crafted challenges. Staff skilfully use questions that develop pupils' ideas and refine their skills. Teachers identify pupils who are struggling and ensure that they have the help that they need to catch up quickly, particularly pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, most pupils have the skills and knowledge in reading that are typical for their age in key stage 1.
- In key stage 2, teachers focus on novels and using drama to add interest and bring stories and poetry to life. Reading books are carefully selected to match pupils' abilities and provide appropriate challenge. Timetabled reading weeks, as

seen during the inspection, include teachers arranging 'class swaps' which provide pupils with opportunities to hear teachers' favourite stories and which in turn share the joy of reading. You acknowledge that you need to embed the changes you have made to ensure that higher proportions of pupils are working both at the standard expected for their age, and at the higher standard in key stage 2.

- Finally, I explored what leaders are doing to address the persistent absence of pupils. I was concerned about the number of pupils who had been persistently absent in the last two years. You know your families very well, particularly the most vulnerable. Many agencies are contacted to work with parents so that they have the support that they need to help their children. You have a strong track record of engaging pupils who were previously reluctant attenders and learners in other schools. Attendance overall is now in line with the national average, which has a positive impact on improving the progress that pupils make. However, there remain a small minority of children whose education is interrupted by too many absences.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and teaching assistants ensure the most appropriate resources are used to allow children to write accurately and neatly in phonics sessions
- they embed the changes made to teaching reading, so that a higher proportion of pupils work at the expected standard, and at higher standards, by the end of key stage 2
- they build on the successful strategies for increasing links with parents in order to provide parents with confidence and skills to help their children at home, particularly with reading
- staff continue to work with the few parents whose children's progress is interrupted by too many absences.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you and senior leaders. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and members of the safeguarding and pastoral teams. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to create a report. However, I spoke informally with parents at the school gates and met a group of parents who had requested a meeting with me. You provided me with the most recent parent survey, which you carried out earlier in the year. I also took account of three free-text responses from parents. I spoke to several staff informally during the day. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. I evaluated the 23 responses from staff to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body's meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; and pupils' work and their reading logs.