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Ian Nicol  
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Dear Mr Nicol

### **Short inspection of Leven Valley CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 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 July 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 have continued to cultivate a school in which every pupil is nurtured and valued. Since the previous inspection, the school has gone from strength to strength. Your youngest children get off to a flying start in Reception and pupils make good progress across the school.

You, your staff team and governors ensure that the school is a happy and caring community underpinned by Christian values. Staff are fully committed to your vision for developing the whole child. Your high expectations are shared by staff, pupils and parents. You have successfully improved the fabric and appearance of many aspects of the school buildings and outdoor areas. You know the strengths of the school and have a clear understanding of what you need to develop further. All staff who completed the online survey agreed that they are proud to work at the school. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and the life of the school. You are outward-looking and have established strong partnerships with local primary schools. Teachers work with other schools and the local authority to check that their assessments of pupils' work are accurate.

Pupils are cheerful and polite. They love coming to school and attendance is above the national average. Pupils enjoy strong relationships with staff. As one pupil put it, 'Teachers are kind and caring.' Pupils get on very well together at breaktimes and are quick to support each other if there is a difficulty. They work hard in lessons and are keen to learn.

All the parents I spoke with are delighted by the good-quality education that their children receive. Typically, parents said, 'This is a wonderful school, which is extremely well led, has great staff and helps the children to always be their best.' Another parent said, 'My child is very happy here. I especially like the emphasis staff place on an active lifestyle and doing things outdoors.' Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The school improvement plan now includes measurable targets that help gauge the success of actions that are taken. You have maintained a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning by enabling staff to access training that improves their work. Pupils are being routinely challenged in their work and, as a result, are making better progress. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to ensure that pupils made stronger progress in writing. You have revised the curriculum and give pupils real experiences to write about. The use of outdoor learning is a good example of how pupils use the school's unique setting as an inspiration for writing. Pupils now develop their ideas more fully and write at length across the curriculum. These strategies have resulted in improvements in pupils' writing. For example, in 2017, progress in writing at key stage 2 was above the national average. Even so, you are aware that more pupils need to develop their vocabulary skills further so that they can write at the higher standards.

You and your team have identified the need to raise standards in mathematics through giving pupils more opportunities to improve their fluency in applying mathematical skills.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They keep detailed records, which are of high quality. Leaders and the school administrator ensure that all checks are in place before adults start working at the school. All staff and governors have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff know what to do if they have concerns. Links with external agencies are strong, including those with the local authority. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that pupils are safe and are well cared for.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They have been taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are online. Pupils told me that bullying is rare and that adults are very quick to deal with any bullying, should it occur. Pupils have completed a bicycle training course, learning about how to stay safe while cycling on the road.

## Inspection findings

- Low numbers of pupils within year groups mean that comparisons with national averages must be treated with caution.
- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which was the progress made by pupils in writing since the last inspection. You have put strategies in place that are already having an impact. The use of themes such as 'Egyptians' and 'Vikings' engages pupils' interests and provides them with the opportunity to apply skills across the curriculum. There is a strong focus on pupils editing and improving their written work. Pupils use punctuation well when completing extended writing. Teachers are focused on improving pupils' vocabulary so that more pupils can reach the higher standards. My review of your data, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that they are making stronger progress in writing than in the past.
- One of your school priorities is raising standards in mathematics across the school. A new approach to developing the mathematics curriculum is bearing fruit. The subject leader for mathematics is working with staff to improve pupils' fluency with number calculations. Inspection evidence indicates that while progress in mathematics is improving, it remains an area for further development.
- Pupils achieve well in reading and most make good progress. Over time, the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check is above average. The pupils who read to me used their phonics skills well and displayed a genuine interest in reading.
- You have a clear vision for improving the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. You ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well. Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils take part in a wealth of outdoor education activities, such as sailing, camping and open water swimming that improve their confidence and resilience. They have access to a woodland area where they can explore nature. Pupils relish the myriad of extra-curricular activities, such as sports, art, music and residential visits. They value opportunities to take on extra responsibility as buddies to younger pupils, librarians or being on the school council.
- Governors are passionate about the school. A governor commented, 'We want to develop well-rounded children who are nurtured from the start.' Governors make good use of their wide range of skills and experience to provide effective challenge and support to leaders. Close links between named governors and particular subjects give governors insights into the work of the school and provides evidence to support their views.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop the depth and richness of pupils' vocabulary so that pupils can use these in their writing
- pupils have more opportunities to extend their mathematical skills and fluency with number calculations.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I met with you, middle leaders and with four members of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 27 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 26 free-text responses. I also considered the views of all eight staff through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.