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Mrs Deborah Wylie
Principal
Cramlington Village Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wylie

Short inspection of Cramlington Village Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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. Your passion, enthusiasm and determination are the most important factors in the school's development. Since the last inspection, you have skilfully led and managed the school's growth. The addition of Nursery provision means classes now extend across the full primary age range. You have stayed true to your vision, maintained your high expectations and carefully built a staff team who share your ambition to 'empower everyone to achieve'. Parents are delighted with the quality of education you provide, and your staff feel the school has moved forwards very positively under your continuing leadership.

Cramlington Village Primary School has more than tripled in size since the last inspection and has become an established part of the town's education landscape. You, together with your senior leaders and governors, have built positive working partnerships with other local schools and external agencies so that the school is now very well connected and integrated into the community. You are outward looking, drawing support and inviting challenge from partners in different local authorities. Furthermore, you work closely with a wide range of agencies to safeguard pupils and access specialist support for the relatively high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents appreciate this and feel that their children are very well supported and cared for.

Over time, outcomes in the early years and key stage 1 have continued to be strong, comparing favourably with national averages. In the last inspection, Ofsted challenged you to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Since then, you have

successfully implemented a structured approach to the teaching of writing, and you have ensured that curriculum topics are rich and inspirational. For example, the 'Macbeth' project, in which pupils worked alongside a professional actor, clearly captured pupils' imagination. Written work in books is alive with the colour and excitement gleaned from this authentic and meaningful experience. Pupils' writing is rich in content. However, there are some errors in basic punctuation and in the correct use of vocabulary that detract from some pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and other senior leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. You have rigorous procedures in place to vet the suitability of all adults who work in or visit the school. You also ensure that your staff are well trained, including in how to recognise the signs of radicalisation or extremism in young people. You have well-developed systems in place for staff to refer any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare. Record-keeping is of good quality. Leaders have developed an effective programme for pupils in need of social and emotional support, working with a range of external specialist agencies as required. Furthermore, you and other leaders demonstrate a determination to resolve any concerns about a pupil's safety quickly and decisively.

Pupils told me that standards of behaviour in school are good and that there is little bullying. They also told me that they are taught how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Parents I spoke to and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were confident the school is a safe place.

Inspection findings

- Standards of achievement in the school have improved since the last inspection. The addition of Nursery provision has been well received by the community and is contributing effectively to the rising standards in the early years. In the Nursery and Reception classes, facilities have been improved, and the environment is now vibrant and stimulating, both indoors and outside. Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year have risen year-on-year and remain consistently above those seen nationally. Teaching in the early years ensures that children quickly develop their knowledge and skills.
- In recent years, an above-average proportion of pupils have attained the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check. Furthermore, teacher assessments for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 have continued to match or surpass those seen nationally. This provides a strong foundation for pupils entering key stage 2.
- Last summer marked the first year in which pupils in the school completed their primary education and sat key stage 2 national tests at the end of Year 6. Provisional results must be interpreted cautiously because this was a small class in which a high proportion of pupils left or joined the school during the key stage, including several pupils who were not formally assessed at key stage 1. The provisional results suggest that pupils made better progress in writing and

mathematics. However, their progress in reading appears to have been more variable, as several pupils fell short of the standard expected for their age.

- You and your staff have already reviewed where these pupils lost marks in the reading test. You have responded quickly by issuing new guidance for teachers and have begun this term by looking closely at the effectiveness of daily guided reading sessions. The sessions you and I visited had some notable strengths, with good questioning and some very helpful support from teaching assistants. In most lessons, the tasks your teachers had designed challenged pupils to read carefully, draw on evidence and infer deeper meaning from the clues in the text. Occasionally, however, the booklets that pupils worked in did not provide enough space for pupils to record their ideas, and some fonts used were more difficult to read for some pupils. You are confident the school's teaching of reading is effective, but agree some aspects need further refinement.
- The school library is in need of development. Currently, the library has a limited range of books, with few suitable books for the most able readers. More needs to be done to foster a love of reading. For example, currently there is no facility in place beyond the school's reading scheme for pupils to borrow books to read at home.
- You have provided your staff with a clear rationale for the design and implementation of the curriculum. Under your guidance, topics are designed to be real and engaging. Wherever possible, you guide your staff to seek ways to make topics authentic. This was typified when you arranged for a circus to visit the school as part of your 'Greatest Showman' topic and when your project on the Greeks was launched through a theatre workshop. Providing pupils with first-hand experiences is central to your approach. Staff also consult pupils to gather their ideas for topics and they canvas pupils' views about the quality of the curriculum.
- As the school has grown, subject leaders have begun to play a more significant role in shaping the curriculum. In some subjects, such as mathematics, there are well-developed curriculum plans in place that set out the ideas and concepts that pupils should understand. However, the quality of subject leadership is still developing. Some middle leaders are more effective than others in shaping the curriculum and using their experience to improve the quality of teaching.
- The governors are astute and knowledgeable about the school. They have provided strong support since the last inspection to help you manage the challenges of a growing school. They also hold you to account effectively. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well because they visit regularly and invite scrutiny from partners in different local authorities. The governors meet regularly and have clearly defined roles linked to the priorities in the school development plan. New governors are quick to access relevant training and benefit from a good induction programme.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is rigorously monitored, so that strategies to improve pupils' reading and technical writing skills are further refined
- the library is developed, so that it plays a more significant role in promoting a love of reading
- the skills of middle leaders are further developed, so that they contribute more effectively to developing the curriculum and the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the vice principal and the special educational needs coordinator, the literacy and mathematics leaders, some teachers and the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I also met with a group of parents to gather their views about the school. Together, you and I visited lessons in key stages 1 and 2 to look at the quality of teaching and learning. During lesson visits, I scrutinised some pupils' books and talked to some pupils about their learning and progress. The literacy leader and I looked in detail at some pupils' reading booklets and I scrutinised a range of pupils' books across a broad range of subjects. I looked at the 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, assessment information and monitoring records. I also checked other documents available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils, especially those in key stage 2, how well the school promotes and teaches reading and the quality of the curriculum. I also looked at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.