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Mr Ralf Smits
Headteacher
Borrowdale CofE Primary School
Stonethwaite
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Dear Mr Smits

Short inspection of Borrowdale CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership of the school has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion for learning permeates through the school. Staff and governors share your high aspirations and your commitment to your pupils and their families. Pupils said they are taught to value learning, value each other and value themselves.

Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection and those who accessed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were overwhelmingly positive about the school; 100% would recommend the school to others. They are pleased with the individualised care and support given to their children by you and your staff. 'My child is thriving in this wonderful little school,' typically reflects the views of many parents.

The positive relationships fostered within the school contribute to pupils' positive behaviour and attitude towards learning. Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered. Older pupils take their responsibility as role models for younger pupils very seriously. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to broaden their horizons beyond the immediate locality with trips and residential visits. For example, a recent trip to London to experience the Houses of Parliament and a West End musical was very popular. Pupils enjoy the varied clubs and activities they can attend. They are proud to represent the school in local sports competitions, for example in cross-country.

You and your staff have made good progress in tackling the areas for improvement

identified at the last inspection. Training for staff ensures that they can share ideas and expertise with other colleagues. Teachers give pupils the skills that they need to review and edit their own work accurately. As a result, pupils understand clearly the next steps in their learning to improve the quality of their work. Pupils in key stage 2 apply their knowledge and skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively in their written work, including in other curriculum subjects. They are proud of their achievements, and this is reflected in the quality of the work seen during the inspection, especially in key stage 2. However, weaknesses remain in pupils' application of their phonetic knowledge, especially in Year 2.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. Changes you have made to the teaching of mathematics are improving pupils reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of these changes on improving outcomes for pupils. A high proportion of pupils in Year 2 do not have the skills and knowledge typical of other pupils of a similar age nationally, particularly their language and communication skills. This hampers the progress that pupils in Year 2 make in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are understood by staff. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils, including all volunteers who are in school regularly. All records relating to safeguarding are maintained meticulously, including all the relevant documentation relating to the operation of the school's minibuses.

Staff and governors receive regular training and are kept up to date on relevant safeguarding issues. Staff know the pupils extremely well and can quickly identify if there are any concerns. Leaders work with other agencies very effectively to ensure that pupils and families receive appropriate guidance.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and know that there is an adult in school they can talk to, should they have any worries. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through a variety of different activities, including assemblies and talks from visitors. They also understand how to stay safe online. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that there is no bullying in school and that it would be dealt with swiftly should it occur.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I followed up several key lines of enquiry. The first was around attendance. I wanted to know what actions had been taken to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Attendance overall has improved consistently over the past four years and is now above the national average. The school has provided minibuses to transport pupils who live outside the local catchment. This has had a positive impact on improving the attendance and punctuality of pupils. Pupils who have been persistently absent now attend regularly. You and your staff have worked diligently to ensure that

parents understand the importance of attending school regularly and the impact that it has on the progress that pupils make. Pupils who spoke to me said: 'It's important to attend every day so you don't miss out on anything.' The headteacher contacts parents promptly when pupils are not in school to ensure that pupils are safe, especially the most vulnerable pupils.

- Next, I was interested to find out how you support the increasing proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities in the school, particularly in key stage 1. Pupils have a variety of special educational needs including communication, speech and language delay and social and emotional needs. Training for staff ensures that they have the skills to meet pupils' needs effectively. Pupils who are struggling are identified quickly. They are given the help they need individually or in small groups, particularly with their social and emotional development. Staff are deployed well to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. You work effectively with a number of outside agencies and other professionals to ensure that pupils and their families have the help and guidance they need. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points because of the personalised help that they receive.
- We also discussed how your children reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. You and your staff quickly establish positive relationships with the children and their families before they start school through several well-thought-through activities, for example visiting them in their own homes. The majority of children typically start school with knowledge and skills below those of other children of a similar age nationally. The small numbers of children that start the school each year mean that you know them very well. Parents comment on how well their children settle into school.
- Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn. They use assessment information effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning. You have identified that poor language and communication skills are the key barriers to learning for some children. You work with professionals from charities, and the local authority, to engage parents in their children's learning. For example, workshops at the library in the local town are well attended. These workshops help to ensure that parents have the skills they need to help their children at home. Activities in school capture the children's interests and meet their needs effectively. They make good progress from their starting points. Provisional assessment information indicates that an increased proportion of pupils reached a good level of development in 2018. Children are prepared well for Year 1.
- I also wanted to know how you teach phonics. Phonics is taught systematically from Reception. Staff's good subject knowledge impacts positively on the progress pupils make. Historically, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard for the phonics screening check in Year 1 is in line with the national average. You have identified correctly the reasons why most pupils did not reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2018. You have made swift changes to the organisation of how you teach phonics, particularly for Year 2 pupils. A high proportion of pupils in Year 2 have SEN

and/or disabilities. Staff receive training from the speech therapist to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to help the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities develop their speech, language and communication skills effectively. Phonic activities match the needs of the pupils well. Pupils use their phonetic knowledge well in their reading. Teachers provide pupils with books that match their phonetic skills appropriately. They are becoming more confident as readers, particularly in Year 1. However, pupils do not use their phonetic knowledge in their writing, particularly Year 2 pupils. This hinders the progress they make in their writing.

- Finally, we discussed the actions you have taken to improve outcomes in mathematics. Leaders have accurately identified the various reasons why there was a dip in the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in 2018. You have made changes to the way you teach mathematics. Training for staff ensures that they have the knowledge and skills that they need. Teachers work with other colleagues to share ideas and expertise. Teachers quickly identify the gaps in pupils' learning. Staff are deployed well to help pupils to catch up quickly. Staff use questions effectively to encourage pupils to expand their ideas and explain the calculations they use to solve challenging problems. Pupils said that they like the changes to the way mathematics is taught because teachers explain clearly what they have to do, and they enjoy the challenges that teachers set for them. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes on improving outcomes for pupils, particularly at the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics is taught consistently, enabling pupils to apply their phonetic knowledge accurately in their writing and improve outcomes at the end of key stage 1
- they embed the changes made to the way mathematics is taught in order to improve outcomes for pupils, particularly at the end of key stage 2.

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

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of staff. I also spoke with four members of the governing body, including a phone call to the chair of governors. I also had a conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils formally during the day and I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day.

I took account of nine responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered the 15 free-text comments and the 18 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information and a range of documentation, including the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding procedures and practices.