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Mr Huw Davies
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Dear Mr Davies

Short inspection of Ghyllside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 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.

Since taking up your position as headteacher, you have worked with the staff, parents and carers to create a shared vision at this school, where pupils are encouraged to be independent in their learning. Your aim 'to produce well-rounded individuals who have the skills necessary to go on to lead happy lives' is clear to see in many aspects of the school's work. You make the most of the unique geographical setting of the school to ensure that all pupils experience an exciting and vibrant curriculum that is enhanced by many outdoor enrichment experiences. Pupils continue to do well at this school. Attendance remains higher than the national average and the rate of persistent absence is well below the national average.

Your self-evaluation of the school is accurate. You know that, in the past, disadvantaged pupils have not made the progress they are capable of in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Despite your focus on the needs of these pupils, the skills of your leaders and governors to measure the impact of funding have not been sharp enough to enable the disadvantaged pupils to make the best possible progress in mathematics.

When inspectors last visited the school, they asked you to improve the quality of teaching further. Since then, you have been active in keeping a careful focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You carry out regular checking activities to monitor the quality of work in pupils' books and talk to teachers

and pupils about the learning taking place. As well as this, you work closely with your partner schools from across the town to engage in regular professional discussions about the quality of work in other schools. You said that this level of professional challenge helps you to monitor the work in your school more closely. Middle leaders and senior leaders benefit from professional development by taking part in these activities with you. They told me that it helps them have a better understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. As a result of these actions, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is high in comparison to the national average. Outcomes for pupils leaving key stages 1 and 2 are improving year on year.

Inspectors also asked you to improve progress and attainment in mathematics. You introduced a new scheme of work and a new calculation policy. This helped to ensure greater consistency in how mathematics is taught and assessed. Across the curriculum, pupils have many opportunities to apply their mathematical skills, for example regular problem-solving activities as part of their outdoor learning and mapping work in geography. Since 2016, pupils leaving Year 6 have continued to make strong improvements. For example, in 2016, 68% of pupils achieved the expected standard in mathematics. In 2018, this rose to 80%. Mathematics work in pupils' books demonstrates that the high standards across the school are being sustained.

Parents speak very highly of the school. They say that teachers are approachable and supportive. They told me that behaviour in the school is good and that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents are particularly proud of the shared vision for the school. Those that I spoke to were unanimous in their affirmation that all staff put the pupils at the heart of the school's work. All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school.

Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school. Older pupils were eager to discuss the many exciting opportunities that they have on residential visits every year. They talked enthusiastically about the many trips that they experience as part of their curriculum enrichment, such as trips to museums, the theatre and an upcoming trip to the zoo. Pupils clearly enjoy the many extra-curricular clubs that run, such as computer coding, chess, football and netball. They are very proud of the school's successes in a diverse range of sports, such as cross-country running, mountain biking, wheelchair rugby and football.

Governors are passionate for this school to be the best school it can be. They articulate the school vision well. Governors are aware of the school's many strengths and equally clear about the areas that need to be improved further. However, more work remains to be undertaken to enhance governors' skills even further so that they can challenge leaders better, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the best possible progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements across the school are thorough. All checks on the suitability of adults to work in school have been carried out diligently. All members of staff have recent safeguarding basic awareness training and the 'Prevent' duty training, which teaches staff to be vigilant at spotting potential signs of radicalisation. Members of staff are clear in their understanding of the procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns. Three members of the senior leadership team and one member of the governing body are trained in safer recruitment. Governors have ensured that all safeguarding measures are effective across the school.

You work with a range of agencies, including children's social care and school health, to ensure that pupils and their families receive good support. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. While discussing e-safety with pupils, they told me not to share my personal information with strangers and never click on a screen that might pop up while I am on the internet. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when travelling to school on their bicycles and as pedestrians when crossing busy roads.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused on three key lines of enquiry. The first of these related to the early years. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of children in the school achieving a good level of development was below the national average. Through a range of effective actions, this proportion increased to 72% in 2017, which was higher than the national average, and it remained at 72% in 2018. The early years is a bright and exciting learning environment. Children get off to a good start. Staff regularly engage children in writing and language development through play. Children have many opportunities to explore writing, reading and counting across a wide and engaging curriculum. They explore their creative and artistic skills through many exciting activities. For example, children use the role-play area well to create costumes and they create patterns from leaves. Children develop their mathematical vocabulary well while exploring in the sand, discussing 'bigger' and 'smaller'. Leaders make accurate assessments of the children. Any trend suggesting a decline in progress is quickly identified and addressed. Leaders in the early years provide good additional support to parents in the form of workshops. These have included strategies to help parents deal with challenging behaviour and how to better enforce boundaries away from school.
- The next area that I looked at was in relation to reading in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in 2016 was 61%, which was below the national average. You quickly put a range of measures in place, including the introduction of additional activities to supplement the existing reading provision. You recognised that inference and comprehension skills needed to improve. As a result, you enhanced the promotion of reading across the school. The school library is in a prominent position and is used well by all pupils. A more structured approach to the organisation of reading resources further enhances reading across the school. Pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 have books that are accurately matched to their ability and provide a good level of challenge.

Pupils enjoy reading and are able to articulate their reading habits well. They are knowledgeable about a wide range of authors and talked enthusiastically about their favourite books. As a result of these actions, the attainment of pupils leaving Year 2 has risen for three consecutive years and, in 2018, 79% of pupils achieved the expected standard.

- The final area that I looked at during the inspection related to the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics. Test results for 2017 and 2018 indicate that disadvantaged pupils leaving Year 6 have not done as well in mathematics as other pupils nationally. As a result of the poor performance of this group, a range of measures were put in place to target and provide extra support to all disadvantaged pupils in mathematics. As a consequence of this more focused approach, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in school is rapidly improving and, in most cases, it is in line with the progress of all other pupils in school. Pupils' books across the school show that disadvantaged pupils are challenged well to reach their full potential.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- further embed the changes made to increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making good progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- further develop their skills to measure the impact of additional funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and members of the senior leadership team. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Together, we visited classes in each key stage. I spoke to pupils in the classes that we visited and viewed examples of their work. I spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime in the hall and on the school playground. I talked to parents at the start of the school day.

I examined a wide range of documentation, including the school single central record, the school self-evaluation document and the school development plan. I considered the 90 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I took into account the 33 responses to the staff survey and the 61 free-text responses.