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Mrs Sandra Cummings
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Dear Mrs Cummings

Short inspection of Waberthwaite Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 January 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Overall, staff and pupils are positive about the school and feel that it is improving. Parents and carers are supportive of the acting headteacher and praise her warm and approachable manner. However, there remain a few parents who are unhappy with the school. Some of their concerns centre on the lack of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The quality of provision for this group is not good enough; the leadership team is focusing upon improving the help pupils receive in class by giving teachers useful support strategies.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a succession of headteachers and turbulence in staffing. The local authority and diocese have provided some helpful support during this time. Staff absence and instability have had a negative impact upon the progress of pupils in upper key stage 2.

In class 3, the parents of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils feel that their child's teaching is improving. While pupils in this class are beginning to make better progress, many of them have significant gaps in reading, writing and mathematics. The leadership team has attempted to drive up standards in writing since the previous inspection, but its efforts have not had the desired impact. Scrutiny of pupils' English and extended writing books shows that expectations of the quality of pupils' writing are not high enough. Although many of them succeed in the English, grammar, punctuation and spelling test

at the end of Year 6, they do not apply this knowledge in their own writing. There is a lack of support for pupils with SEND and low prior attainers to effectively structure their writing, form their letters correctly, spell correctly and punctuate their work.

The leadership team ensures that children in class 1 have a flying start to their education. Children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 learn well due to a well-organised and engaging learning environment coupled with expert delivery of the early years curriculum. Children play well together and proudly show how well they can read and count. Similarly, in class 2, pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 benefit from a bright and stimulating environment; they learn well in mathematics and reading. Last year, the leadership team focused upon improving mathematics to good effect. Pupils are confident to complete mathematical challenges independently. Low prior attainers benefit from the school's investment in apparatus to help them solve problems practically, while high prior attainers benefit from more challenging, conceptual work.

At the previous inspection, the leadership team was asked to continue to improve the quality of teaching and to reorganise governance so that there are clear roles and responsibilities. The quality of teaching in classes 1 and 2 has improved, leading to stronger progress for many pupils. Almost all members of the governing body were not in post at the time of the previous inspection. Governors have reorganised themselves and have clear roles and responsibilities. They regularly seek the views of parents and are highly supportive of the leadership team.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The single central record meets requirements, child protection training is up to date and child protection records are kept securely. You showed me some good examples of how you follow up serious concerns in a timely manner in order to support pupils and their families. All staff have received essential child protection training, supplemented by training about issues such as extremism and radicalisation.

A few parents who had responded to Parent View felt that their children are not safe in school. This view was not mirrored by the pupils I spoke to. All pupils that I spoke to felt safe in school. Pupils are appropriately registered at breakfast club and there is good attention to their individual well-being. Inspection evidence supports the view that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry centred on how well pupils behave and how effectively the leadership team deals with bullying. A small minority of parents who responded to Parent View do not feel that bullying is dealt with appropriately. All pupils whom I spoke to felt that they knew whom to tell if they were being bullied and that the teacher would resolve the problem for them effectively. They felt that there was some name-calling at school, but that it was not tolerated by the teachers. They did not feel that bullying was a significant issue.

- This view was reinforced by the responses to the pupil survey. The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pupil survey felt that bullying did not happen in their school; staff who responded to the survey agreed. The small minority who felt it did happen also felt that teachers were really good at resolving it. There were no recorded instances of bullying for this academic year.
- Pupils behaved well at social times and in lessons; they told me that this was typical. There have been no permanent or fixed-term exclusions since the previous inspection. Pupils are polite, well mannered and keen to talk about their school. There are particularly high standards of behaviour in Nursery and Reception class and Year 1. Children share and take turns. They treat their peers with respect and are proud to show off their reading, counting and story-telling skills.
- The second line of enquiry focused upon standards in writing. The 2018 results show that the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in writing was below average in key stages 1 and 2. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of teaching and learning show that standards in writing are not improving quickly enough. While efforts have been made to raise standards, there is little impact. Pupils receive insufficient support to help them spell, punctuate and structure their writing appropriately. Support for pupils with SEND is beginning to improve as teachers are given strategies to help them better meet pupils' needs.
- The third line of enquiry was to assess how well leaders and governors have brought about improvements since the previous inspection. There have been improvements to teaching, but staffing instability has hampered pupils' progress over time. Governors now have clear responsibilities and have effectively supported leaders through some difficult times. However, the quality of provision for pupils with SEND, the progress of pupils in upper key stage 2 and standards of writing throughout the school have not progressed as they should have.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- standards in writing rapidly improve
- support for pupils with SEND continues to improve
- pupils in upper key stage 2 are well supported to fill the many gaps in their knowledge and skills.

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

Sally Kenyon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You were on maternity leave at the time of the inspection, so I spoke to you on the telephone. I met with the acting headteacher and we jointly conducted almost all of the inspection activities. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and met with members of the governing body. I spoke with a range of pupils and parents before school, during social times and in lessons. I scrutinised a range of workbooks across a variety of subjects and year groups. I analysed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I looked at the school's record of checks made on the suitability of staff and records of child protection and staff training. We discussed wider safeguarding. I considered 13 free-text responses and 25 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered 20 responses to the pupil survey and seven responses to the staff survey.