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Mrs Johanna Goode
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Dear Mrs Goode

Short inspection of Grasmere CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You continue to be an inspirational headteacher who leads by example in your many and varied roles. You ensure that staff morale is high by valuing all that staff do and making sure that everyone works together as a team. You state on your website that underpinning the school are 'strong, caring relationships and a shared zest for life and learning' and that was evident during the inspection.

You, senior leaders and governors reflect carefully on the school's performance and have an accurate view of its strengths and priorities. For example, governors told me some of the ways in which spellings are being improved and how pupils are building their confidence in aspects of mathematics. The school improvement plans include precise actions to make sure that all pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, and for life more generally.

At the previous inspection, in 2014, the inspector asked the leadership team, including governors, to improve teaching by ensuring that work for all pupils,

especially the most able, challenges them to reach even higher standards. The quality of teaching over time is never less than good and is often better. This is because you ensure that there are many opportunities for teachers to share best practice, both across and beyond the school. You and each member of the senior leadership team have considerable expertise and work with teachers to ensure that activities are stimulating and planned to maximise pupils' learning. As a result, pupils across the school are making good progress and some are doing even better than this. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in those reaching higher standards in reading and mathematics and greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2.

The inspector also asked you to improve the leadership and management roles of leaders, other than senior leaders. Since the previous inspection you have appointed several new staff and restructured the leadership teams. You have ensured that each subject leader creates an action plan for their subject to contribute to whole-school improvement. These plans have precise targets and timescales by which to measure the impact of actions taken. You provide time for leaders to monitor progress in their areas of responsibility through observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Subject leaders know the rates of progress of individual children across the school. This allows them to help teachers and teaching assistants in tailoring support and interventions for those pupils who fall behind with their work.

You and the staff ensure that children get off to a flying start in the early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development was higher than the national average in 2018. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average in 2018. Similarly, the proportion reaching higher standards in reading and mathematics and greater depth in writing was also above the national average. Pupils are clearly being very well prepared for the next stage in their education. This is one of the many reasons why parents choose this school for their children, despite not living locally.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and love learning. This is reflected in above-average levels of attendance by the vast majority of pupils. Parents commented on how appreciative they are that staff 'go the extra mile' to develop pupils' character as well as their academic skills. You are mindful of the pressures on young people today and the importance of fostering both their mental and physical well-being. Whole-school outings, scrambling the fells around the school and admiring the beauty of nature puts life's challenges into perspective both for the children and staff. One parent summed up the views of many in describing this as 'an absolute diamond of a school'.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I

arrived at the start of the inspection the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was clear for me to see.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date, so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families. Parents told me how well they are supported when, as a family, they go through challenging times. They also described the efforts that you and your staff made to help pupils get back into school routines following the turmoil caused by the severe floods of 2015.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection I explored the strategies that leaders and managers use to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics. Since the previous inspection, the mathematics leader has implemented a new whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics. Leaders frequently check that teachers effectively plan activities for the range of abilities in their class using this new approach. Through observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books, leaders support teachers well. Teachers develop pupils' confidence in using number bonds and reasoning skills so that even more pupils are working towards the higher standards by the end of Year 6. Teachers are focused on providing more challenge for pupils through problem-solving activities and opportunities to prove verbally why an answer may be right or wrong.
- I explored the strategies used to broaden pupils' vocabulary and develop their skills in spelling accurately. In early years we observed how the teacher extended children's vocabulary by encouraging them to use their senses to describe their observations, following the teacher's dissection of a fish. The teacher effectively questioned the children to encourage conversations about similarities and differences between human bodies and those of fish. Teachers in key stage 1 and key stage 2 encourage pupils to regularly record new words in their personal dictionaries. This helps them to remember spellings accurately. The daily spelling, punctuation and grammar sessions are having a positive effect on increasing pupils' vocabulary and improving accuracy with spellings. This is reflected well in pupils' topic work on, for example, the Second World War and the Anglo-Saxons. Leaders have a steely determination to build pupils' range of vocabulary and improve their spelling.
- You ensure that the curriculum offers an extensive range of learning experiences. Teachers give freely of their time to organise residential trips to outdoor-education centres and to cities such as London. Pupils were extremely animated when they described the stark contrasts they had found between life in a city and their rural communities. Pupils get a first-hand experience of the range of cultures and faiths in Britain today. They told me how much they learned from visiting the National Holocaust Centre and Museum. This has deepened their understanding of Judaism, some of the causes of conflict in the world and the

importance of living in a democratic society. You, along with other leaders, ensure that all aspects of the primary curriculum are covered and that there is an appropriate balance between subjects. Developing pupils' interest and experience in the arts is central to the school. All pupils learn to play the ukulele and the singing at the school's Christmas production was of a high quality. The brass tutor explained how he has adapted the valve notation so that pupils who have special educational needs can more easily learn to play a brass instrument. This level of planning by the tutor is a reflection of how well staff adapt to the varying needs of pupils. The excellent standard of performance given by the brass ensemble was testimony to the effectiveness of this. It also shows how you provide opportunities for pupils who find academic subjects hard to excel in other areas such as the arts and sport, including sailing.

- Finally, I was very impressed by the behaviour of pupils. They are a credit to you in the way in which they show a deep level of respect towards each other, the adults around them and to visitors to the school. All pupils are hungry to learn new things and develop new skills. You, your staff and numerous volunteers go to great lengths to identify and reduce any barriers to learning. This enables all pupils to get the best possible start in life, both in their personal development and academic achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers maintain their focus on providing a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
- teachers continue to focus on broadening pupils' vocabulary and increasing their accuracy in spelling in order for pupils to improve their writing further.

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

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body, and with you as the designated safeguarding leader. I analysed 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke informally with parents at the school

gates, and prior to the Christmas performance, to seek their views. I also took account of 38 free-text responses from parents. I analysed the 12 staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils, spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons, and analysed the 28 pupil questionnaire responses. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; pupils' work and their reading logs.