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Mrs Lynn Millington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Millington

Short inspection of Netherton Infant 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is a happy and caring environment. Together with the staff you have ensured that all pupils and their families are welcomed. Pupils' work and achievements are celebrated well across the school. The promotion of good reading habits is evident in the classrooms, in the corridors and in the well-resourced library.

The attainment of pupils leaving key stage 1 has been in line with that of other pupils nationally for several years. Although reading attainment dropped last year, it continues to be a strength of the school. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check has risen consistently for three years. In 2018, 95% of Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard. The school's own assessment information indicates that the majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in English and mathematics.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. You have used a wide range of evidence to create a school development plan that sets out realistic and achievable goals to move the school forward. You have made strong links with a number of local primary schools. Pupils regularly have the opportunity to meet other pupils through sporting and arts events. They learn about the wider world through studying different countries in depth. For example, they have recently learned about Taiwan, Spain, France and India. They have deepened their learning through engaging in traditional dance, music, arts and food tasting. They find out about the major faiths and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils said that they enjoy school. Their behaviour in lessons and while moving around school is good. They enjoy talking about their learning. They said that name-calling and bullying do not happen. They also said that they are always nice to one another. They relish the range of extra-curricular clubs that are on offer, for example yoga, cricket, art and sport.

Parents and carers speak highly of the school. Parents that I spoke to and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys said that leaders are friendly and approachable. They had no concerns about the safety of their children and said that the behaviour of the pupils is good. Several parents were particularly keen to praise the school for the support it provides to vulnerable families and to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many parents compared the school to a happy family. All of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school.

Governors know the school well. They are supportive of it and are regular visitors. They are well aware of its strengths and the areas that need to be further developed. They have ensured that they spend additional funding through the pupil premium carefully to support disadvantaged pupils. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked leaders to improve the school's website. Leaders now keep it up to date. It contains all the required information in an easily accessible format.

The inspectors also asked school leaders to improve achievement in mathematics. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils achieve the expected standard. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in mathematics has increased each year. You have reorganised the systems in school for the teaching of this subject. You now focus on providing the pupils with more practical experiences. For example, there is a focus on developing their ability to reason, find things out for themselves and explain their answers. They are developing good skills in how to apply mathematics to different situations. Work in pupils' books is of a high standard. They take pride in their learning. Teachers said that they enjoy teaching the subject. They have received training, which they said has helped them to develop better questioning skills. They said that they also benefit from working with teachers in the partner schools to check on the quality of their pupils' work and compare it to the work of pupils in other schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have ensured that all appropriate checks on the suitability of adults to work in the school are in place. All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding basic-awareness training and 'Prevent' duty training to help them spot signs of potential radicalisation. You have received enhanced training in awareness of child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. You and the staff know

the pupils and their families well. Together, you are alert to the dangers that pupils face. You work with several agencies, including national charities, children's social care and the police, to ensure that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to the early years. The early years is a well-resourced learning environment. The very youngest children enter the school's provision for two-year-olds. A significant number of these children go on to join the Nursery and the majority of these children then move into the Reception class. School assessment information indicates that children enter the school with skills and knowledge that are below what is typical for their age. Children's language and mathematical skills are low on entry. One of the ways that you have addressed this is by ensuring that children in the early years have opportunities to write, read, draw and apply their mathematical skills across a wide range of activities. Children enjoy their learning. For example, they told me how they were counting sprouts for Mrs Claus. When they had finished they wrote her a letter and posted it. Effective modelling and questioning by teachers encourage children to talk about their work. Many opportunities to engage in role play are evident inside and outside the classroom. For example, children constructed a large sleigh out of crates and used their imaginations well to pretend they were delivering presents as Father Christmas. Leaders keep detailed assessments of all children. Strong links with parents ensure that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. There are high levels of engagement with parents through the use of the electronic learning journals. Although the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been lower than the national average for several years, children's work and assessment information indicate that they make good progress during their time in the early years.
- The next area that I focused on related to the quality of writing. You have redesigned the way that you teach this in the school. You have put a greater emphasis on giving pupils opportunities to talk about their writing. Teachers work hard to develop creative stimuli that engage both boys and girls. For example, pupils in Year 2 have recently written about the character of the beast in 'Beauty and the beast'. Pupils in Year 1 enjoyed writing about the dragon's egg that appeared overnight in the school. Pupils use a wide range of punctuation and spelling with increasing accuracy. Inspectors saw examples of pupils' books from Years 1 and 2. These showed clear progress in boys' and girls' writing. Sometimes the most able are limited in their opportunities to develop their writing across the curriculum. Too often they complete the same work as all other pupils. Pupils do not have the skills to write neatly. Leaders have put plans in place to develop handwriting across the school but it is too early to judge the impact of this work.
- The final area that I focused on during the inspection was attendance. You celebrate good attendance well in the entrance hall and in your weekly assemblies. Pupils enjoy competing for the award for the best-attending class. You have worked with parents to improve attendance. However, it dropped

sharply last year, even though you regularly remind parents of their responsibility to ensure that their children are in school. The proportion of pupils who have been persistently absent from school has been stable for several years. From your analysis of data, you have recognised that a significant number of parents continue to take children out of school on unauthorised holidays. Despite your efforts, attendance remains below the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue with their efforts to improve attendance
- pupils are given more opportunities to develop their writing across the curriculum
- pupils develop a neat and consistent handwriting style.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

With you, I carried out visits to each class. I examined a wide range of school documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, the school self-evaluation and the school development plan. I scrutinised a range of school assessment information. I viewed examples of children's learning journals in the early years and scrutinised writing and mathematics books in the classes we visited.

I checked the school's single central record and details of staff recruitment, training and suitability to work in the school. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

I spoke to pupils in the classes that we visited. I observed their behaviour in class, moving around the school and while at play. I met with parents before the inspection. I took into consideration the 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered the 14 responses to the staff survey and the 16 responses to the free-text facility.