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19 January 2019

Mrs Angela Anderson
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Dear Mrs Anderson

Short inspection of Holme Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019, 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the staff and governors, you have ensured that the school is a welcoming and vibrant learning environment. Healthy living and well-being are promoted well through colourful, vibrant and informative displays. Pupils' artwork and writing are displayed in prominent positions to celebrate success and share examples of excellent work. Pupils learn about different values each half term. They know what it means to be determined and to succeed. They understand the importance of perseverance.

For several years, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 has been high in comparison with the national average. The progress that pupils make in reading by the end of Year 6 is among the best in the country. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the phonics screening check has been higher than the national average for several years, as has the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in English and mathematics at key stage 1.

Leaders' self-evaluation of the school is honest and identifies where the school's strengths and weakness are. Nevertheless, there were errors in some of your interpretation of assessment information that had not been checked with sufficient rigour. The school's development plan sets out relevant priorities to move the school forward. However, leaders do not always evaluate the effectiveness of their actions well enough to measure the impact on pupils' outcomes.

Pupils that I spoke to were very positive about the school. The majority of those who responded to the pupils' survey, and those that I spoke to, stated that they would recommend the school. Pupils told me that bullying and name-calling are rare, but if they did happen, that their teachers are swift in their response to deal with the situation. Pupils said that they feel safe in the school. Older pupils were keen to talk about the many trips and visits that they go on, for example the five-day residential experience and other trips to museums and cities that enrich the curriculum. Pupils appreciate the many after-school clubs that are on offer. They enjoy football, netball, gymnastics and tag rugby competitions as they are able to meet pupils from other schools.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on extra responsibilities. For example, they can join the school council, the eco council or the pupil parliament, or become a play leader to help the younger pupils at break- and lunchtimes. Pupils have a good understanding of their place in modern Britain. They were able to discuss some of the major religions and religious festivals that take place over the year.

Parents and carers have wide-ranging opinions of the school. Most parents that I spoke to and those that responded to the Ofsted survey were of the opinion that pupils are safe and well cared for in the school. A significant proportion of parents have worries about the high turnover of staff in recent years. As a result, they are concerned about the quality of leadership and management in the school. Despite these concerns, many of the parents said that the pupils are well taught and make good progress. However, leaders' current methods of communication do not provide parents with sufficient detail about how leadership at different levels within the school is ensuring that pupils are safe and continue to make good progress across the curriculum.

Governors are supportive of the school. They know where the strengths lie and what needs to be done to improve the school further. They challenge you rigorously through effective questioning on different aspects of the school's work. They have ensured that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is spent effectively. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

When inspectors last visited the school, they asked you to improve pupils' writing. You have redesigned the way writing is taught in the school. You place a heavy emphasis on ensuring that all writing opportunities are rooted in high-quality texts. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils have read extracts from the story 'Goodnight Mister Tom'. From this reading, they have completed several writing tasks across a range of genres, including character descriptions and story sequencing. You encourage pupils to talk about their writing, ensuring that they are precise and grammatically accurate. Pupils that I spoke to were able to explain their tasks clearly. Strong writing habits are evident in pupils' English books and books from other subjects. Pupils' handwriting is a strength of the school. Teachers have high expectations, so pupils' work is neat and well presented. As a result of these positive actions, the progress that pupils make in writing by the end of Year 6 has

increased for three consecutive years.

Inspectors also asked you to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management. The roles of the middle and subject leaders in the school have been developed well. All subject leaders now have a clear framework within which to work. They are involved in regular monitoring and evaluation activities of their different subject areas. They check the quality of teachers' assessments and work in pupils' books and share their findings with other teachers during staff meetings. Teachers and middle leaders have regular opportunities to share good practice. Several members of staff are moderators for the local authority. The school works in close partnership with a local teaching school and other schools in its local cluster. Teachers said that they enjoy working alongside teachers from the other schools because they can discuss teaching ideas and share examples of work. They said that this helps them to develop and reflect on their own practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that the systems in place to safeguard pupils are effective. All checks on the suitability of adults to work in the school have been completed thoroughly. You and the deputy headteacher are trained in safer recruitment. All members of staff have undertaken training in basic awareness of safeguarding, as well as 'Prevent' duty training, which helps them spot signs of potential radicalisation.

Members of staff that I spoke to were aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. To strengthen your safeguarding practices, you work with a wide range of external agencies, including children's social care, the community police, school health services and several national charities. You are proactive in ensuring that pupils remain safe in the school and have paid attention to the mental health and well-being needs of the pupils. One member of staff is a trained counsellor and provides individual support for pupils, depending on need.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to early years. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year was below the national average. Through a range of initiatives, including the reorganisation of teaching in early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development rose to 74% in 2018. The early years is a spacious and vibrant learning environment that is well organised, ensuring that children have many opportunities to learn and explore. Children in Reception and Nursery work well together. They have access to many exciting learning challenges, which they meet with high levels of independence. Adults skilfully challenge children and provide timely support where needed. Through analysing past performance information, you found that the level of children's vocabulary was low. In response, you developed the early years environment into one that is rich in text and colourful, interactive displays that encourage high levels of engagement. For

example, children dress up as astronauts, read stories about aliens, design and build rockets, and fully engage in active role play. Opportunities to develop writing and mathematical skills are evident in the classroom and the outside learning environment. Staff in early years keep parents fully informed about their children's progress through the electronic learning journals. From looking at children's work and current assessment information, it was clear that children make good progress during their time in early years.

- The next area that I looked at during the inspection related to the quality of mathematics provision in the school. Historically, by the end of key stage 2, pupils have not done as well in mathematics as they have in English. However, the progress that pupils make has been in line with the national average. For the past two years, few girls have achieved the higher standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- From key stage 1, well-established routines ensure that pupils' work is well organised and tidy. From looking in pupils' books and viewing assessment information, it is clear that there is now no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils apply a wide range of skills well to tackle different types of calculations. In key stage 2, pupils' work is challenging and matched well to different abilities. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to reason and apply their mathematical skills to more complex and investigative problems while developing their thinking further. As a result, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable by the end of Year 6.
- The final area that I looked at during this inspection related to the school's curriculum. Leaders have carefully thought about the progression of skills in different subject areas. For example, in art, design and technology (D&T) and science, I saw evidence of how subject leaders make careful checks on the quality of pupils' work. Pupils' work in art and D&T is of a high standard. As they progress through the school, they develop skills in choosing and using materials and learn about the different tools needed to cut materials. This year, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have constructed bridges capable of holding 1kg weights. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have created magnetic board games. Their skills in designing and evaluating are well developed. In science, pupils apply a wide range of skills well to different situations. By the time they reach Years 5 and 6, they have the skills necessary to design and carry out experiments and investigations with minimal teacher input. They draw scientific diagrams with accuracy, for example complex circuit diagrams and detailed explanations of how a magnet works.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sharpen the school development planning and self-evaluation process, so that they use performance information precisely and measure the impact of their actions rigorously
- they improve progress in mathematics by challenging pupils in key stage 2 sufficiently through more reasoning and problem-solving activities

- parents are better informed about pupils' progress and the school's arrangements for safeguarding.

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

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and two middle leaders. Also, with you, I visited each class and spoke to pupils about their work. I looked at examples of pupils' work in a range of subject areas. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

I examined the school's single central safeguarding record and scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to staff training. I spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime. I spoke to several parents before school. I considered the 66 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, alongside the 46 free-text responses. I took account of the 82 responses to the pupils' survey and the 11 responses to the staff survey.