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Mrs Rachel Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Long Marton School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors ensure that this small village school at the heart of its local community continues to thrive. Owing to your recent addition of Nursery provision and to the school's good reputation in the local area, parents and carers are keen to enrol their children in Long Marton and the number of pupils on roll is increasing. This means that you and your governors can sustain your experienced team of teachers and support staff, who underpin the success of the school. With your strong leadership and direction and support from knowledgeable governors, these staff continue to ensure pupils' good outcomes in their personal and academic development.

Your support for other schools is highly regarded by the local authority. Working as a consultant leader, you have taken on the headship in another school and ensured its sustainability into the future. This also supports leaders in Long Marton in developing their own leadership skills when you are working off site and adds to the strength of your team.

Since the last inspection, you have improved pupils' progress in writing. Consequently, a higher-than-average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard or greater depth in writing by the end of Year 6. Most pupils' handwriting is neat and legible.

The teaching of reading is a real strength of the school. From their earliest days in the school, pupils make strong progress in this subject. They say that they really enjoy reading both at home and school. Importantly, in statutory tests at the end of key stage 2 last year, three quarters of pupils reached the higher standard, almost three times the national average.

Leaders and governors were disappointed in pupils' results in mathematics in 2018. Following a meticulous analysis of why standards dipped, you have acted swiftly to ensure that they are improving rapidly throughout the school, including for the most able pupils.

Your work to promote pupils' participation in sport, music and a range of interesting experiences within and beyond the school is particularly successful. Leaders work in partnership with other small schools in the area to give pupils access to a wide range of activities. Pupils are proud to represent their school in competitions, for example rugby, hockey, running, orienteering, cricket tournaments and chess championships. During the week when I visited, pupils, staff and parents travelled to the Manchester Arena to participate in the Young Voices event involving 6,000 children. All this supports pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff and, indeed, governors give generously of their time to support and organise these activities.

Parents are equally positive. I spoke with a number of parents in the playground at the beginning of my visit. They were all full of praise for the school, saying that they feel very welcome and that staff are exceptionally caring and always willing to listen to any concerns they may have. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were equally positive about the school. They typically commented that staff are dedicated and will always go the extra mile to make learning in Long Marton a rich and enjoyable experience.

Pupils' behaviour and positive attitudes to learning continue to be a credit to the school. Attendance is well above the national average and no pupils are persistently absent.

Governors are very supportive. They bring a wealth of professional experience to their roles in holding leaders to account for the school's performance and effectively fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. They have an accurate and comprehensive view of the school. They ask pertinent questions of you and your leaders to ensure that you make improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The systems in place to check that adults at the school are safe to work with children are effective. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding and child-protection training at least once a year. They understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil, including concerns about possible radicalisation.

Pupils feel happy and safe in the school. They have every confidence that adults are always willing to listen to any worries they may have and that they will help to resolve any problems. Older pupils explained to me that there is very little bullying in the school, including by racist or homophobic name-calling. Pupils understand how to stay safe on the internet. For example, they know not to share personal information online and to seek adult help immediately if they come across any inappropriate material.

Inspection findings

- First, I wanted to find out about children's learning in the early years. You explained to me that with small cohorts, children's starting points when they enter the school vary widely from year to year. The teacher is experienced and particularly skilled in adapting teaching to meet children's needs. This supports children's good progress in all areas of their learning.
- Children are eager to learn. Indeed, a parent I spoke to at the beginning of the school day summed up many other parents' views. He commented that his child would much rather be at school than at home and was disappointed when it was the weekend.
- Teachers in the early years are skilled in picking up on children's interests and enthusiasms to extend their learning. For example, a child in the Nursery built a volcano in the sand pit. The teacher encouraged him to talk about this and helped him to find more information on a computer tablet about volcanoes around the world and even about what happened in Pompeii when Vesuvius erupted.
- I also wanted to know what it is that makes you so successful in developing pupils' exceptionally good reading skills. I chatted to a group of older pupils at lunchtime and they said that there is always a wide choice of really interesting books. They also told me that their teachers read to them every day. Teachers read with expression to bring characters to life and make pupils want to find out what happens next in a story. Most pupils said that they also enjoy reading widely at home. All this, together with skilled teaching of reading skills throughout the school, underpins pupils' strong achievement in this subject.
- I wanted to find out about how you have developed the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils in your school community. I observed how you ensure that they make good progress in subjects such as science because you give them so many opportunities for practical investigations in physics, chemistry and biology. Pupils also benefit from a specialist language teacher who teaches French throughout the school. I noted that pupils' progress in history and geography is less rapid than in other subjects. This is because teachers do not systematically review pupils' prior learning and use this to plan activities that deepen their knowledge and understanding of these subjects.
- I was interested in the actions you have taken to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly that of the most able pupils. You explained that you analysed pupils' responses to questions in test papers and found that there were weaknesses in their understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages and

ratio and proportion. You worked with teachers to adjust planning to focus on improving pupils' skills in these areas. I observed that this is already having a positive impact on their learning.

- Pupils are more confident in applying their skills to a range of problems – and not just in mathematics lessons. For example, pupils in Class 4 designed bird boxes to scale before building them in a design-and-technology project. Teachers set the most able pupils difficult challenges in lessons. These pupils do not simply move on from one calculation to another. Rather they are encouraged to think hard about increasingly complex problems and explain their methodology. This supports their development of increasingly high levels of understanding and mastery of this subject.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum continues to develop and support pupils in deepening their knowledge and skills, especially in history and geography.

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

Janette Corlett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and three other leaders. I spoke with a group of pupils at lunchtime. The headteacher accompanied me on visits to classes, where I observed learning across the school. I looked at work produced by pupils in early years and key stages 1 and 2. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and five members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, and leaders' attendance information. I considered the school-improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also checked on the contents of the school's website. I spoke with parents in the school playground and considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 37 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility, 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 59 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.