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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



30 November 2018

Mrs Nicky Edwards
Headteacher
Dent C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School
Laning
Dent
Sedbergh
Cumbria
LA10 5QJ

Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Dent C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 September 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.

Governors and staff share your high expectations and passion for learning. You and your team are committed to ensuring that pupils develop the skills that they need to be successful learners. The high aspirations you have for pupils are reflected in the '7 values' you share together of 'justice, forgiveness, endurance, trust, service, wisdom and compassion'.

Parents and carers that I spoke to during the inspection, and those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's Online questionnaire, were overwhelmingly positive about the school. All parents would recommend the school to others. Many commented that, even though it is a tiny rural school, it reaches far and wide with the opportunities provided for their children. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) spoke positively of the individualised care and support given to their children. 'My children are thriving and constantly surprising us thanks to this amazing team,' typically reflects the views of many parents.

Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered. They took delight in telling me about the exciting range of trips that you and your staff arrange to inspire their learning

and arouse their curiosity. Pupils are very keen to learn, and relationships at all levels are highly respectful. They enjoy the varied clubs and activities that they can attend. They are proud to represent the school in local sports competitions with increasing success, for example in rugby.

You, staff and governors have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Governors have the skills and knowledge they need to support and challenge you effectively. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement. Governors review the impact of action plans, and they visit the school regularly to check the detailed information that they receive from you, by talking to staff and by talking to pupils about their work. They share your vision and ambitions and are proud to be part of the school. Governors appreciate that the school is important to the local community.

Training for staff ensures that they now use assessment information accurately to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Activities build on pupils' knowledge and ignite their interest. Well-crafted learning activities challenge and support pupils effectively and meet their needs. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their learning further. For example, older pupils told me that they have learned their times tables and that this is helping them to solve mathematical problems. Pupils enjoy the challenges that teachers provide. Teachers deploy staff well to help pupils who are struggling to catch up quickly, particularly in phonics and spelling.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. You and your team have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. You have ensured that subjects other than English and mathematics are taught so that teachers build systematically on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Pupils have the opportunity to use and apply their writing and mathematical skills very effectively. This is particularly the case in science, art and design and information technology. However, subject-specific knowledge and understanding in history and geography are less well developed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff understand them. Documentation and detailed records relating to safeguarding are meticulously maintained by leaders. Checks are in place to ensure that all adults in the school are suitable to work with pupils, including the many volunteers who visit the school regularly.

Training for staff and governors ensures that they are kept up to date on relevant safeguarding issues. Staff know the pupils extremely well and can quickly identify any concerns. All safeguarding procedures are clearly understood and followed precisely. Leaders work with other agencies and charities very effectively to ensure that pupils and families in challenging circumstances receive appropriate support and guidance.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through a variety of different activities, including instruction on water safety, assemblies and talks by visitors. They also understand how to stay safe online. They enjoy school. They feel happy and cared for and know that there is an adult in school that they can talk to should they have any worries. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and the distress it can cause. They are confident that there is no bullying in school and that it would be dealt with swiftly should it occur.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at several key lines of enquiry. The first was about the curriculum and how it can be used to inspire pupils' writing. You are crafting a curriculum that reflects pupils' interests and meets their specific needs. In science, work on habitats and pollution in the ocean inspired pupils to write their own poetry. For example, one pupil wrote: 'Lifelessly, the florescent octopus was gazing into the deep, dark ocean mist.' Training for staff is effective in improving teachers' subject knowledge and skills. You work with volunteers in the local community to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic and musical skills and knowledge very effectively. You have worked with colleagues and other professionals to develop design and information technology. Activities progressively build on pupils' prior learning, and pupils apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations. For example, pupils design and make the set for the Christmas production, which will be performed for parents and the local community. However, the development of pupils' subject-specific knowledge and skills in history and geography is in its infancy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a wide range of opportunities to broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations beyond the local community. For example, pupils visit Liverpool's art galleries and musical performances. They particularly enjoy the opportunity to perform their own dance compositions and songs at musical events for the local community.
- I was interested to find out how you support the high proportion of pupils with SEND. Pupils have a variety of special educational needs, including dyslexia, autism and social and emotional needs. Good subject knowledge and training for staff ensure that they have the skills to meet pupils' needs very effectively. You work well with a number of outside agencies and other professionals to ensure that pupils and their families have the specific help and guidance that they need. Pupils receive a good level of support from all staff to ensure that their individual needs are met well. Detailed records are collated with information from parents and the 'voice of the child'. Pupils with SEND make good progress from their individual starting points because of the personalised care and help that they receive.
- Finally, we discussed the teaching of phonics. Leaders ensure that staff have the training that they need to teach phonics accurately and consistently. Staff's secure subject knowledge contributes to the good progress that pupils make. Teachers use assessment information very effectively. Consequently, activities match pupils' needs accurately and support and challenge them appropriately. Teachers quickly identify any pupils who are struggling and provide the help that

they need to catch up quickly. Reading resources accurately match pupils' phonetic knowledge. As a result, they use their phonics skills when they are reading. They are confident, competent readers. Pupils, including the more able pupils, apply their phonetic knowledge accurately in their own writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the teaching of subject-specific knowledge and skills in history and geography so that it is of the same high quality as in other curriculum subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Carlisle, the regional school's commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of staff. I also spoke with four members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. I visited classrooms with you, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils formally during the day and I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of ten responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered the five free-text comments and the ten responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding procedures and practices.