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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Katharine Horder
Headteacher
Threlkeld CofE Primary School
Blease Road
Threlkeld
Keswick
Cumbria
CA12 4RX

Dear Mrs Horder

Short inspection of Threlkeld CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You demonstrate strong leadership, with a quiet determination to provide the best possible outcomes for your pupils. Your staff and governors value this. You identified that, in previous years, reading standards had been strong and, although you were disappointed by the dip in reading standards in 2016, you have put in place actions which are already showing that reading is improving.

You and your team have taken action to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers and other adults have high expectations of pupils and their individual needs. They plan well to meet these needs. However, you and I agreed that more can be done to help pupils reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics.

Governors support and challenge you. They bring a variety of skills which are used to good effect. Governors have a good understanding of the spending and impact of the pupil premium and physical education and sports funding. They also have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and its current priorities for improvement.

Your pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and well mannered at all times, in lessons and around school. Pupils struggled to recall any incidents of bullying,

including racist and homophobic name-calling. However, they are sure incidents would be dealt with quickly by staff. Because of your well-planned curriculum, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They are very aware of the impact of social media and their digital footprints. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of British values. Tolerance and respect for others are clear in pupils' work and in their behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well. Assemblies are used to encourage pupils to think about and respond to their environment, the school's faith and the experience of others.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They value the open communication which they have with staff and say: 'The school offers a supportive environment for every child to thrive in.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The strong culture of safeguarding is evident across every aspect of the school's work. You and your staff know each pupil well, and provide high levels of nurture and support. Your governors ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, including checks on teachers and governors.

Your pupils say that they enjoy school. This is echoed by parents and confirmed by pupils' good attendance. This is as a result of the individual care and attention which pupils receive.

Concerns about pupils' welfare are quickly identified and addressed. Your tenacity to ensure that your pupils are as safe as possible means that procedures are clearly documented and their follow-through to conclusion is evident.

Training for staff is up to date. Consequently, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent to benefit the disadvantaged pupils. Alongside leaders, they carefully track the good progress made by this small group of pupils.
- Governors also ensure that the sports funding has been spent to increase the sporting provision in your school. As a result, pupils have access to a wide range of sporting opportunities and have the skills and confidence to enter, and win, local sports competitions.
- Parents and pupils value your broad curriculum and the additional opportunities you provide after school. Pupils succeed in a wide range of subjects, including art and music. All pupils learn to play the recorder and clarinet. Parents appreciate this and feel that music is a strength of the school. However, less focus is placed on geography. As a result, pupils' understanding of other places and cultures within Britain is less well developed.
- Subject leaders understand the strengths and areas for development in their

subjects and track pupils' progress and attainment to inform their next steps. For example, the dip in reading outcomes in 2016 has led to a strong focus on reading for understanding, which is rapidly improving pupils' achievement in this area.

- The presence of well-established routines and high expectations means very little learning time is lost. Teachers constantly check how well pupils are progressing and adjust their teaching during lessons. As a result, pupils currently in school are making good progress from their starting points. An improving proportion of pupils, including middle-ability pupils, are on track to reach the higher standards in reading and mathematics.
- Phonics is taught well and the proportion of current pupils on track to reach the expected standard at the end of Year 1 is high. Your highly skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that those pupils who did not reach the expected standards in phonics at the end of Year 1 catch up quickly.
- Your pupils make good progress with written calculations and mathematical understanding is developed well in the early years. For example, as a result of good questioning, children were able to order their teddy bears and then work out how many cubes tall they were. The teaching assistant working with the children then challenged them to write how many cubes tall their bears were. Some of the more able pupils are challenged in mathematics in key stage 2 through opportunities to solve problems and reason with numbers. However, this is not consistent across the key stage.
- In writing, the most able pupils in key stage 1 are working towards the higher standards. They write at length in English and are given opportunities to write in other subjects, such as science and history. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are developed well and are used well in pupils' own writing. Pupils in key stage 1 were able to write a set of words to describe their teddy bears, such as 'snuggly' and 'cheeky'. However, the words chosen were not very exciting. You and I agree that more can be done encourage pupils to use more ambitious vocabulary.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is a result of consistent and well-planned lessons. There are opportunities in some classes to embed and deepen these skills when writing at length in history. One pupil wrote in history: 'Without warning, a razor appeared at his wrist – the girl didn't notice – he raised his hand' However, this quality of writing is not found in all classes and there are too few opportunities to write in other subjects, such as science and religious education, so that few pupils are writing at the higher standards.
- Your early years leader has a good understanding of children's early development. Children enter school with standards that are slightly below those typical for their age, although this does vary from year to year. Nevertheless, because of the good teaching they receive from all staff, the proportion of children who leave Reception with a good level of development matches the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards by:
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to investigate numbers and explain their reasoning in mathematics
 - providing more frequent opportunities for all pupils to write in detail and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English
- pupils further develop their understanding of other areas of Britain by:
 - further developing the geography curriculum
 - developing pupils' understanding of areas in Britain which differ from their own.

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

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, subject leaders and governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. You and I visited classes to observe learning and looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with four parents in the playground before school. I considered the 22 responses on Parent View and 20 free text comments made by parents, as well as the school's own pupil questionnaire. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils in the playground and in the dining hall. I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked to you, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.