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Mrs Lindsey Martin
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Dear Mrs Martin

Short inspection of Gosforth CofE 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many staff changes in recent years, which you have managed well. A period of instability is now behind you and you have galvanised staff into taking a consistent approach to teaching across the school. You have engaged well with parents, in part by improving communication between home and school. As a result, parents speak very highly of the school and of your leadership. A significant number of parents responded to Parent View and all would recommend the school to others. The leadership team and governors know where there are strengths and where you are still working to improve. This has ensured that your plans for improvement are accurate and focus on areas most needing improvement.

You have developed a harmonious ethos which makes everyone feel welcome and happy. All pupils spoken to said that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils enjoy lessons and say that teachers are kind and help them to learn. The atmosphere in lessons and outside is calm and pupils are well supported. In lessons and around school, pupils are well behaved, listen well and have good manners. Pupils and parents agree that pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school.

At the previous inspection, the inspector reported strengths in pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 2 and the subsequent progress made by pupils in that key stage. These strengths have been maintained. As well as the

very positive behaviour witnessed, the quality of teaching in key stage 2 is strong. This is evident in the progress observed in lessons, in pupils' work in a range of subjects and in published performance information. The previous inspection reported improvements needed in pupils' writing, in having a more consistent approach to assessment and in how children learn in the early years. Your work to improve pupils' writing is now paying dividends. The progress made by key stage 2 pupils has improved consistently over the last four years and is now a strength. You have also introduced a new assessment system which is used across the school. This allows you to check on the progress of all pupils regularly and to shape the support given to pupils making slower progress. Records observed in use in the early years clearly demonstrate that the approach to learning allows pupils to learn through play and their own inquisitiveness, as well as through tasks arranged by the teacher.

We discussed the current strengths of the school and the areas you are working to improve. Your development plan rightly focuses on raising standards and the quality of teaching in key stage 1 so that pupils make stronger progress. You also recognise that your work to allow most-able pupils to gain broader depth in their knowledge of subjects is not yet complete.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are well-established procedures in place to keep children safe, for example the checks made on new members of staff before they are allowed to work with children. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Records viewed on inspection show that, where pupils are potentially vulnerable, leaders act swiftly to protect them from harm, involving external agencies when needed. Safeguarding records and policies are up to date and reflect the most recent government legislation. This is because leaders and governors are alert to any changes in requirements and ensure that training is kept up to date.

Pupils say that they feel safe – a view shared by every parent who gave an opinion. Leaders emphasise the importance of regular attendance to parents. Overall, attendance is above average and is improving and only a few pupils are absent for extended periods of time.

Inspection findings

- You have been successful in your drive to improve standards in writing. This has been achieved by changing your approach to the subject and improving pupils' motivation to write. Pupils now write at length about recent events or about their learning within different subjects, for example in history or science. By teaching the basics of writing, including spelling, grammar and punctuation, more regularly, teachers have noticed that gaps in their pupils' knowledge have reduced. Work in pupils' books confirms that they are making strong progress over time. We agreed that the progress seen in key stage 2 remains a strength and that your work to improve pupils' progress in key stage 1 needs to continue.
- Teachers pay due attention to challenging pupils at an appropriate level,

according to individual abilities. Work in books and in the lessons observed shows that tasks are mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. You have recently completed further training with staff to help ensure that the most able pupils are able to develop a broad and deep understanding of the subjects they learn. Work in mathematics is a good example of this and there are examples of the most able pupils completing tasks which allow them to reason and explain their thinking when solving problems. However, at times, pupils do not have opportunities to complete such tasks soon enough within the lesson and this limits the progress made. We agreed that, although there are some good examples of this work, it remains an aspect that should improve further.

- There has been a period of instability in early years and in key stage 1. Three new teachers joined these departments last year and are now settled in their new classes. You complete regular monitoring of their teaching, giving helpful guidance and advice in order to effect ongoing improvement. You also keep a careful check on the progress made by individual pupils. You have plans to allow new teachers to observe the strong practice in key stage 2 and to visit established teachers in other schools to help reinforce the quality of teaching. This is part of your drive to secure improved outcomes for pupils in key stage 1, especially in mathematics.
- You have developed effective systems to ensure high levels of attendance. Your work with parents has meant that overall attendance has risen steadily over the last three years and remains above the national average. The number of pupils who are regularly absent is also low in comparison to other schools.
- There is now a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. The teacher responsible ensures that teaching groups are well organised and that additional support is given where it is most needed. As a result, pupils are making stronger progress in learning their letters and sounds.
- The governing body provides effective challenge and support. They have a good knowledge of their statutory requirements and keep up to date by attending meetings. They are regular visitors to the school and there are high levels of attendance at meetings. They have divided tasks to monitor different aspects of school performance and report their findings back to the group. This helps to secure a collective understanding of how well the school is performing. Minutes from meetings show that governors are provided with detailed information which they use to support and challenge leaders to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching in key stage 1 continues to improve, so that pupils make stronger progress, especially in mathematics
- most-able pupils have increased opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding of subjects.

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

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher and the mathematics leader. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with parents who were dropping off pupils at school and considered the responses from 39 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I visited all classrooms with you to observe and speak with pupils about their learning. We also scrutinised pupils' books from a range of subjects in each class. I also listened to four pupils read from Year 2.

I considered a wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school development planning, attendance, governance, assessment, monitoring of teaching and safeguarding.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.