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Mr D Spruce
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Spruce

Short inspection of Appleby Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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. Your appointment has reinvigorated staff's enthusiasm for teaching. You are committed to enriching opportunities and broadening horizons for pupils at Appleby Primary School. You are supported well by a very capable leadership team. Your high expectations are shared by staff and governors.

Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection, and those who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, commented positively about the school. They spoke about the positive impact you have had on the school in such a short time. Parents appreciate your presence each morning as you welcome their children to school. They typically said that their children love coming to school and enjoy learning. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities spoke highly of the support and guidance they receive.

The positive relationships fostered by the adults in school contribute to pupils' good behaviour and attitude towards learning. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and care for each other. They appreciate the wide variety of clubs and activities on offer, including instrumental lessons and running club. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as librarians and positive role models for the younger pupils. They enjoy the residential trips because of the opportunity to challenge themselves. For example, they talked enthusiastically about the mountain challenge to reach the summit of Helvellyn. Pupils are proud of their school. Those who spoke to me said, 'Appleby school is a really good place to be.'

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Leaders have developed a culture of professional dialogue, support and challenge among staff. Staff appreciate the opportunities to share ideas and expertise with other colleagues, including colleagues from other schools. Leaders have worked effectively to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, the improvements to the way grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught have had a positive impact on improving the quality of pupils' writing. We discussed the development of the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics in more detail during the inspection. We looked in particular at the depth of knowledge and understanding pupils gain in specific subjects. We also looked at the way pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported, including pupils who attend the resource base in 'Emma's building'. I was also interested to see how phonics is taught. During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures are clearly understood by staff. Training ensures that staff can identify any signs of neglect or abuse. Leaders work effectively with charities and other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the appropriate guidance and support that they need. When pupils move to other schools, systems are in place to ensure that they are safe and that they settle quickly.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there is an adult in school they can talk with should they have concerns or worries. Pupils recognise that a small proportion of pupils struggle to make the right choices about how to behave but said confidently that adults in school give them the help that they need to improve their behaviour. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that should any bullying occur, teachers would deal with it quickly.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry looked at the high mobility of pupils. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school is above the national average. This is mainly due to the increased proportion of pupils leaving the school. Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection. An unsettled period for leadership and governance led to a period of uncertainty for parents. You are working closely with staff and governors to re-establish positive relationships with parents and the wider community. This has been highly effective. For example, the recent harvest festival and community coffee morning were very well attended. The new chair of the governing body has taken decisive action and is working with a private provider to establish a website that is informative and celebrates the positive achievements of pupils at the school. The majority of parents who commented on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school to others.

- The small proportion of pupils who join the school within a key stage are supported well and settle quickly. Leaders identify any gaps in pupils' learning and pupils receive the help that they need to catch up quickly. Leaders ensure that pupils who need help with their social and emotional development are given the support and guidance that they need. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitude to learning and contributes to the good progress that pupils make.
- Next, we looked at how phonics is taught. Phonics is taught systematically from Nursery. Leaders provide training for staff and ensure that phonics is taught consistently well. Teachers' good subject knowledge impacts positively on the progress pupils make. Activities meet the needs of pupils and challenge them appropriately. Teachers use phonics assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Staff provide the help that pupils need to catch up quickly. Pupils' work shows that they can use their phonetic knowledge with increasing accuracy in their own writing. Teachers provide pupils with books that match their phonics skills appropriately. They are becoming more confident as readers. Well-attended workshops provide parents with the information that they need to be able to help their children at home. As a result, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check is above the national average.
- We also discussed how pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported in school, including pupils who attend the resource base in 'Emma's building'. Leaders know pupils well. They have accurately identified the barriers to learning for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that staff receive training so that they can meet pupils' needs effectively. Pupils work in small groups or individually, particularly for their social and emotional development. Leaders endeavour to ensure that pupils are in the right place emotionally so that they are ready to learn. Leaders work effectively with several outside agencies and charities to provide pupils and their families with the social, emotional and pastoral support that they need. Leaders gather information to accurately identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, particularly in their reading. Parents commented that their children are supported well as they move on to secondary school. Well-thought-through activities involving parents, staff and pupils allow them to build up relationships before their children start at secondary school. Pupils settle well because they are effectively prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils who attend the resource base have a variety of complex needs. Training for staff ensures that they meet pupils' needs extremely well. Very positive relationships contribute well to the welcoming atmosphere within the resource base. Pupils thrive in the nurturing environment that staff have created. Activities meet the needs of pupils effectively. Parents are kept informed about their children's experiences at school through shared messages and photographs. Assessment information shows that pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points. Parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities speak highly of the support, help and guidance they receive from the leader for SEN and the staff.

- Finally, we looked at the actions you have taken to resolve the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders have successfully implemented changes to the way grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught. Leaders provide training for staff. They check to make sure that it is implemented consistently. Teachers work with other colleagues to share ideas and expertise. Teachers give pupils the skills that they need to review and edit their own work accurately. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively in their written work. Pupils understand clearly how to improve the quality of their work, particularly in literacy. Pupils were able to explain how punctuation can be used to improve their writing. They understand how it can make it exciting and interesting. Pupils are proud of their achievements and this is reflected in the good quality of the work seen during the inspection. A high proportion of pupils currently in school have the knowledge and skills typical for pupils of a similar age nationally, particularly in writing.
- Since the last inspection leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which ignites pupils' interests. Pupils said that teachers make learning interesting. For example, pupils in Year 5, studying the novel 'Tom's midnight garden', by Philippa Pearce, as part of their history work on the Victorians, said it helps them to imagine what it might be like to be a child in Victorian England. Pupils carry out their own independent research which builds on the work that they do in school. For example, Year 6 pupils have discovered some interesting facts about Mayan sacrifices. Although pupils study a broad range of subjects other than English and mathematics, leaders have not ensured that learning systematically develops subject-specific knowledge and skills in any depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils deepen further their subject-specific knowledge and skills in curriculum subjects other than English and mathematics.

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

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also spoke with three members of the governing body and had a conversation with a representative of the local authority. 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 several parents at the start of the school day. I took account of 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 56 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I also considered the 21 free-text comments and the 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information and a range of documentation, including the single central record.