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Mr J Harvey
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Dear Mr Harvey

Short inspection of Calthwaite Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 March 2015.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you joined the school in January 2018, you have quickly established yourself as an effective leader. You have taken time to reflect on what works well and where improvements can be made. There is a keen focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This allows senior leaders and governors to keep abreast of developments so that the quality of teaching and learning across the school remains good. You and your staff communicate well with parents and carers. You see them as key partners in pupils' education. Parents value how open and welcoming the school community is and how well individual pupils are known. All parents who either responded to the Parent View or spoke to me said that the school is well led and managed. The following comment is typical of many which were received by parents: 'It is a fantastic village school and the children are well looked after and all educational needs are met'.

Calthwaite is a vibrant and happy school where pupils love to attend. Pupils value the broad range of opportunities they have to develop, both academically and socially. For example, they value the sporting events and the regular trips, which include residential. Relationships at all levels are highly positive. Staff are strong role models for pupils' expected behaviour and pupils follow this lead. Pupils work well together and respect each other's views. They say that poor behaviour is very rare and is quickly dealt with when it happens. Pupils enjoy the tranquil environment where the school is located. They value the outdoor space which allows them to play, explore and learn. All pupils spoken to and the vast majority of parents agree that children are happy and well cared for at Calthwaite.

You have fully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The first of these was to ensure that children in early years made stronger progress by further developing the use of outdoor space. There has been significant investment in this area. The outdoor space is now much larger and accommodates a wide range of learning opportunities for children. This allows staff to focus on aspects of children's learning that require development, such as children's physical development. Children have access to high-quality learning experiences both in and out of the classroom and make strong progress as a result.

The second aspect related to how middle leaders check the impact of their work across the school. Middle leaders take responsibility for whole-school aspects such as special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and English. You ensure that middle leaders now have an accurate view of standards and provision in their areas of responsibility because of the careful monitoring they undertake. Middle leaders' roles are well defined and they regularly discuss the quality of provision with you and governors. As a result, middle leadership is now a strength.

The final area for improvement was pupils' spelling ability. This continues to be a key focus in the school. There is a daily spelling lesson for all pupils. Activities are closely matched to pupils' abilities, so they are challenged appropriately. Your assessment records and the work we saw in pupils' books show that pupils' spelling ability is developing well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Although safeguarding incidents are very few and far between, procedures are clear and visible. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns. The record of checks completed on adults before they start to work with children is comprehensive and robust. This record is checked regularly by an external consultant and also by the chair of governors to ensure it is up to date and accurate.

Staff and governors complete regular safeguarding training to ensure they remain alert to any new issues. They also receive updates from changes to government legislation relating to safeguarding. Every parent and pupil who expressed a view agreed that the school keeps children safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed some lines of enquiry at the start of the inspection. The first of these related to how leaders had improved pupils' writing in key stage 2. This is because in 2018, performance information showed that pupils made stronger progress in writing than they did in reading and mathematics. Leaders have changed the approach to the teaching of writing more recently. There are more opportunities for pupils to re-draft and edit previous pieces of work as they build up to a final piece of writing. This allows pupils to learn from mistakes and gives

them a better understanding of how to improve their work. This can be seen in pupils' use of more challenging vocabulary and punctuation and the variation in sentence structure. Tasks are matched correctly to pupils' abilities and pupils know how they can improve their work by practising correcting errors as they emerge (such as spellings). Progress over time is clear in pupils' books. This strong progress is also confirmed by the school's assessment records. However, pupils' presentation of work is not of a consistently high standard in all classes.

- The second line of enquiry was to consider whether the recent improvement in pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 has been sustained. Key stage 1 pupils are split between two classes. Year 1 pupils are taught with Reception children, and Year 2 pupils share a class with Year 3. Pupils continue to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because staff know pupils very well. Regular assessments take place, so staff are aware when the progress of any pupil slows. Plans are quickly put in place to address any barriers to pupils' learning. Leaders of English and mathematics have given ongoing support to ensure that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics remains strong. Work in pupils' books and your assessment records demonstrate that key stage 1 pupils continue to achieve well. However, as is the case in key stage 2, pupils' presentation of work is not always of a consistently high standard.
- The final line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. This is because there was a three-year decline in pupils' attendance up to 2017 and the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent from school also increased in that time. As the school is so small, you know families very well. This allows you to be alert to any changes to pupils' attendance patterns. You have developed strong systems to check on pupils' attendance and follow up on non-attendance swiftly. Parents are fully aware of the importance of regular attendance and children enjoy the rewards they receive for attending regularly, such as certificates. As a result of your actions, pupils' attendance improved in 2018 and was above the national average. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent also reduced. In the current school year, pupils continue to attend very regularly.
- Governors are committed and are passionate about the school. They attend regularly to challenge and support leaders with ongoing school improvement. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what leaders have done to remedy past shortcomings. They are involved in the planning of ongoing school improvement, which is outlined in the school's improvement plan. Although this plan is focused on accurate areas for improvement, it is not always clear what needs to be achieved and in what timescale.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' presentation of work is consistently high in all classes
- improvement plans contain clear targets which can be measured more easily over

time.

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 spoke with pupils about their work and school life, both formally and informally. I met with you and spoke with members of staff to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I visited classrooms jointly with you to observe pupils' learning. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority.

I scrutinised pupils' work to evaluate their learning over time. I spoke with parents and took account of 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 18 free-text responses. I also took account of seven responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, reports from external consultant visits and information about pupils' progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.