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16 July 2018

Mrs Karen Allum
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Allum

Short inspection of Carlisle Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, ably assisted by your deputy, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Together with the governors, you have developed a positive and inclusive vision for the school that is supported by all. You have created a caring and nurturing ethos where good behaviour and trying hard are valued. You and your leaders are reflective and your self-evaluation is accurate. Governors and school leaders have well-established and effective plans for further improvements to the school.

Pupils are happy at school. They are eager to learn and show enthusiasm when talking about the variety of things they find out about at school. During my discussions with pupils, they spoke about how much they enjoy school trips and the 'active learning zones' in the school. As one pupil commented: 'The school is a fun place because we learn and have fun at the same time.' This reflects the school's ethos, 'Love Learning, Love Life'.

School leaders have addressed the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. Effective training has been provided to develop teachers' questioning skills. In lessons visited, teachers were seen to make good use of open-ended questions to test pupils' understanding.

Governors know the school well. They have devised rigorous systems to check on all aspects of the school's work and to improve their own effectiveness. They are thus

very well informed. They hold leaders to account and ensure that all statutory requirements are in place. Consequently, they are making a strong contribution to driving continuous improvement.

The parents who spoke to me and completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents have high levels of confidence in the school. They report that the school is a welcoming place and they value the way it is led and managed. In a typical comment, one parent wrote, 'Carlisle is a wonderfully nurturing, supportive, friendly environment for children beginning their school journey.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose. You and the school's governors are clear about your responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe at school. The safeguarding culture at the school is strong. Staff are well trained and they understand their responsibilities regarding the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know what to do if there are any concerns about a pupil. Records relating to the safeguarding of pupils are well maintained and show that the school makes timely referrals. Leaders engage well with external agencies to support and safeguard children.

Pupils consider the school to be a safe place where adults look after them well. They are confident that if they report a concern about how someone is behaving, staff will deal with the situation swiftly. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils behave safely in the playground. Parents agree that their children feel safe and well cared for. Your curriculum provides a range of opportunities for pupils to learn to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils spoke knowledgeably about road safety and stranger danger.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed three key lines of enquiry. My first line of focus was on the impact of school leaders' actions on improving outcomes for all pupils in writing. This was because in 2017 attainment in writing at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average.
- Leaders have taken swift action to identify the key areas that needed strengthening. They have responded by reviewing the teaching of handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation and developing a more coherent approach across the school. Teachers have received well-considered training and, as a result, they are now more confident and proficient at teaching handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. The quality of writing seen in literacy books was of a good standard for the majority of pupils. Pupils receive opportunities to write at length and they demonstrate stamina for writing. Pupils in Year 2 are learning to maintain style, language and tense throughout longer pieces of work. However, this standard is not transferred across all subject areas because teachers do not insist that pupils continue to write, spell and punctuate to the same standard.

- Presentation in books is improving and pupils take pride in their work. There is evidence that handwriting is improving; however, this is not consistent in all year groups. It is stronger in Year 2 than in Year 1. You acknowledge that handwriting practice is not regular enough to secure more rapid gains.
- Pupils are confident in reading their writing out aloud and explaining what they are learning. For example, a Year 2 pupil talked about his writing based on the Greek myth of Icarus, describing how the wax on Icarus' wings melted as he flew too near the sun. Pupils say they enjoy writing and their writing targets help them to improve the quality of their work. The most able pupils are producing writing of high quality. The vocabulary they use is ambitious and they take risks in writing sentences which are often complex and adventurous. Displays around school and in the classrooms show that pupils' writing is valued and expected standards are modelled throughout the school.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on looking at whether the gap between the attainment of boys and girls was diminishing and the impact of leaders' work in this area. This was because in 2017 boys achieved less well than the girls in good level of development, particularly in writing.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's approach in the early years foundation stage. They have adapted their planning to ensure that activities for boys are more engaging. Leaders have worked with the local authority early years adviser, focusing on improving the environment and provision to support boys' writing skills. As a result, the outdoor learning environment is better resourced. This provides more opportunities for letter formation practice, enabling children to use their imaginations to develop a wide range of skills. Provisional assessment information for children who are coming to the end of the early years shows that a higher proportion of boys are reaching a good level of development than in previous years.
- Reception classrooms are bright and stimulating, promoting knowledge and understanding of the world and a love of learning. Displays, including those about phonics, are child-friendly and support pupils' learning. There are well-established routines in place and, as a result, children behave well and listen carefully to staff instructions. Children develop good social and emotional skills.
- Finally, I met with subject and year group leaders to analyse the impact of their work on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Year group and subject leaders are enthusiastic and have developed subject portfolios and action plans for their subjects. This reflects their growing understanding of the quality of provision in their subjects. Middle leaders who lead core subjects carry out scrutiny of books and have regular meetings to share their findings. They have begun to strengthen links with the other school in the federation to further develop curriculum provision in the foundation subjects. However, not all subject leaders have the opportunity to observe teaching and learning in their subjects. This hinders their ability to drive improvement and share best practice. This is also the case in the early years. They need support to strengthen their roles to increase their impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation are consistently high
- the role of subject and year group leaders is strengthened to increase their impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Richmond Upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rekha Bhakoo
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching jointly with senior leaders and met with year group and subject leaders. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and held a meeting with four governors, including the chair. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their learning. I observed pupils at play and spoke with them about their school. I scrutinised pupils' work and examined the school's assessment information. I considered a range of information supplied by the school, including policies relating to safeguarding, checks on the quality of teaching and attendance records. The 171 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were reviewed, as were the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.