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Mrs Laura Ritson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ritson

Short inspection of Warkworth Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Following your appointment in September 2017, you quickly got to grips with the task in hand. You wasted no time in improving some crucial elements of the school's work. Staff, parents and carers, and pupils say that they have seen the school go from strength to strength under your leadership. You provide insightful leadership that is rooted in a thorough appreciation of the school's Christian values.

The school's ethos of 'learning together through love, friendship and forgiveness' is evident in your work and that of your staff. The relationships between staff and pupils are heart-warming. Staff know each pupil very well. They engage in regular conversation with pupils about their work and interests. Pupils are tolerant of each other. They often support their friends to help them solve a problem or offer praise. Teachers encourage pupils to have a voice, to become involved in the student council or to share a problem with the therapy dog, 'Co-Co'. Pupils are confident and self-assured.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now much improved. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You provide staff with a plethora of opportunities to learn from each other or visit local schools. As a result of your effective support and guidance, teachers who are new to the profession are doing well. Furthermore, recent changes to the assessment policy are helping teachers provide pupils with more challenging activities and support. Inspection

evidence demonstrates this. In addition to effective use of teaching assistants, pupils in key stage 1 attain well, particularly in their reading and writing.

However, pupils' writing could be even stronger. We observed that some pupils in key stage 2 continue to make basic spelling errors. Teachers correct pupils' mistakes and assess pupils' knowledge by giving them regular spelling tests. Despite this, pupils can sometimes overlook the spelling rules they were taught when they were in key stage 1.

At the last inspection, leaders were also asked to increase the impact that they were having on pupils' attainment and progress. You firmly believe that children need to get off to a good start at school. Consequently, you have focused on improving the quality of provision in early years. You have made some astute staffing appointments and transformed the learning environment into a warm and engaging area to play and learn. Nearly all children now leave Reception having reached a good level of development. Similarly, the proportions of pupils who attain the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science in key stage 1 increased in 2018.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they can identify if a pupil is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or harm. Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff and visitors are safe to work with pupils. A local police officer visits the school regularly to speak with pupils about how to stay safe online and at home. Leaders liaise with a wide range of professionals to provide pupils with specific advice relating to the local area. For example, a group of pupils are involved in kayaking. Pupils use the skills and understanding that they have developed over time to relay specific water-safety advice to their peers.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They know how to share a concern and understand the process for doing so. The school's own information demonstrates that staff respond swiftly and proportionately to any safeguarding concern, reducing the risk to pupils greatly. One pupil spoke for others when saying: 'The teachers here are like a friend – I trust them. I know my teachers really well and know they will look after me.' Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of how to stay safe online and what constitutes bullying. Bullying logs demonstrate that incidents are very rare. Pupils concur. They say that on the odd occasion that friends 'fall out', a teacher is always on hand to help smooth things over.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors play an active role in supporting and challenging staff. You have assisted governors in doing so by increasing the number of meetings they attend and insisting that governors ask searching questions of you and staff. You told me that 'all staff are leaders'. Staff have

been asked to take on additional responsibilities and responded with gusto. Your school improvement plans are detailed. They accurately identify school priorities and are accelerating the pace of improvement. Plans could be refined further to ensure that they are precise, and clearly identify the persons responsible for each action and by whom, when and how progress will be evaluated.

- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. However, because the school is much smaller than average, the absence of a few pupils can have a significant impact on rates of attendance. Consequently, the school's own information highlights that rates of absence and persistent absence are increasing. Leaders have introduced robust strategies to track pupils' attendance. Staff ensure that parents or carers are contacted immediately by telephone or in person regarding any pupil absence. Teachers ensure that pupils returning to school quickly catch up on work that they have missed. A very small proportion of pupils and families do not fully appreciate the importance of good attendance at school.
- The quality of teaching is strong. Teachers encourage pupils to work independently and in groups. Pupils are not given the answers when they are having difficulty. Teachers and teaching assistants promote curiosity. This helps pupils develop a range of strategies to overcome misconceptions. Teachers frequently model the use of vocabulary that is specific to certain subjects. In turn, pupils are increasingly able to imitate their teachers and use the words they hear in their writing. Teachers' thorough planning helps them to manage two age groups within one class. Pupils are settled into routines. This ensures that teachers can move swiftly from one activity or group to the next, making maximum use of the time available. As a result, current pupils' progress over time is improving.
- Pupils' personal development is a real strength of the school. You told me, 'The holistic development of our pupils is so important'. This is evident in the breadth of the personal-development curriculum. It helps pupils to mature and reflect in detail on their physical, emotional and mental well-being. For example, early morning dance classes, 'worry monsters', weekly football coaching and the many leadership roles available to pupils ensure that they are never short of options to 'step out of their comfort zone'. The themed approach to the curriculum in other subjects is developing. Specific topic titles such as, 'Oh I do like to be beside the seaside,' or 'Super heroes,' capture the imagination of pupils and provide a structure for much of their writing. However, this particular approach could be developed further to ensure that pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects as they move through school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to develop strategies to improve the attendance of the minority of pupils who attend school less often
- introduce a strategic, whole-school approach to the development of pupils' spelling

- ensure that plans designed to improve the school's effectiveness are precise and evaluated thoroughly
- review and implement a curriculum that enables pupils to develop their age-related skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects, in a systematic way as they move through the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I accompanied you during observations in classrooms and, together, we reviewed and evaluated pupils' written work. I listened to a group of pupils read and spoke to governors, teachers, pupils and parents. I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. This included the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, in addition to attendance and behaviour logs. I reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations. I took into account the 18 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the responses of 10 members of staff who had completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.