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Mrs Helen Brown
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Dear Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Cramlington Shanklea Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your inspirational leadership has successfully created a highly effective team. As a result of your strong leadership, pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school.

Leaders, including governors, have worked together closely, to ensure that Cramlington Shanklea Primary School is a welcoming, inclusive and happy place. Your vision for excellence and achievement for all is shared across the school. You promote this vision through your day-to-day work with staff and pupils. The care and concern that you have for your most vulnerable pupils is very evident. Indeed, throughout the inspection day, you rightly left our meetings to support staff and pupils as necessary. Staff know that they are valued and supported. Collectively, you are clear that you are making a difference to the lives of your pupils and preparing them for their futures.

Leaders have made year-on-year improvements to the quality of teaching and to pupils' progress in most areas of the curriculum. Your drive and enthusiasm have ensured that recent changes in the staffing have not slowed improvements. You are uncompromising in your determination to ensure that all staff and pupils work to 'be the best that they can be'. After working with you, staff have been able to move onto promoted posts.

At the previous inspection in 2013, leaders were asked to provide opportunities for subject leaders to further develop their role by evaluating the impact of their area of responsibility on pupils' knowledge and skills. You have a strong and developing group of leaders, whose increasing knowledge, confidence and expertise are helping to drive improvements. Your investment in them has ensured that there is continued commitment to excellence and a shared ambition to achieve the highest of standards. Like you, they are willing to, as your prospectus says, 'give it everything they've got'. They know their areas of responsibility and have made notable improvements. As a result, in 2018 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above the provisional national average, both at the expected and the higher standard. However, since the last inspection, progress in reading for key stage 2 from their starting points has been variable.

Leaders were also asked to provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to make choices in how to solve problems. Pupils confirm that they are encouraged to discuss their learning and that in some subjects they are given choices and challenges. At times, teaching is not planned precisely enough to challenge the most able pupils to achieve as well as they might in all year groups and all subjects.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and when moving around the school. They understand that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) find it difficult to behave some of the time. However, they know that all pupils get help if they need it. They speak positively about their 'Castle points' and the 'Shanklea Stars of the Week'. They were also keen to tell me about 'Fudge', the school mascot. Fair, Understanding, Determined, Generous and Eager – these are the qualities that you wish every Shanklea pupil to have. During the inspection, your pupils clearly modelled these characteristics.

Governance is a strength. Governors hold leaders to account for all aspects of school life and are effective in their roles. They share the high aspirations of school leaders and work with purpose to sustain the good quality of education. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths. They make regular visits seeking to verify what leaders tell them. They also have high expectations of themselves and review their training needs and priorities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose. As designated safeguarding leader, you have reviewed and renewed the school's systems for gathering safeguarding information. As a result, staff are able to provide you with detailed information to help you to form a detailed picture of the support vulnerable pupils may need. This means that you identify and provide help to pupils and families. Records are meticulous and well organised.

You ensure that your staff and volunteers receive high-quality regular training. This means that they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the most recent

safeguarding guidance. Consequently, staff are vigilant and have an excellent understanding of their role in keeping children safe from harm. Pupils, therefore, feel safe and are kept safe in the school. They know that they are cared for and known by name.

Pupils speak positively about the numerous ways in which they are taught to stay safe. They talk about the 'walking bus' and 'be bright, be seen'. Pupils were keen to tell me about road safety, cycling safety and online safety. They do not believe that bullying is a problem at their school. They say that pupils can be unkind and sometimes they can fall out. However, they have the confidence to approach any teacher and they know that any issues will be resolved quickly.

Inspection findings

- The leadership of early years is impressive. The 'Shanklea Little Monkeys Playgroup' gives leaders weekly contact with parents and children before they are old enough to enter the 'Shanklea Squirrels', the school's provision for two-year-olds. The Nursery works effectively to help prepare children for school and aid their learning development. When I visited the Nursery, most of the children were listening, with interest, to the story of Cinderella. Later that morning when talking to the children in the dining hall, they were able to tell me that the story included a 'prince' and 'ugly sisters'. Parents and carers are also supported to take an active role in the children's education with the school's challenge card: '30 things to do before you're 3'. These include 'put your own shoes on', 'play I spy to find objects in a book' and 'join the library and borrow a book'. As a result, children are better prepared for the Reception class.
- Teaching and learning across key stages and subjects are good. Leaders recognise that teaching is most effective when teachers pitch activities at the correct level for all. When we visited one of the Reception classes, the children were helping each other to tidy up accompanied by the 'tidy-up song'. The children then sat down in a circle for 'snack and chat'. The teacher ensured that this was a purposeful activity and the children listened well. They were able to recall the reading challenge that they had been set. Children were also able to tell the teacher what their favourite story is, and some were able to give a reason. Teachers effectively plan activities that challenge and interest the children. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2018 was above the provisional national average. However, boys' attainment was lower than that of girls.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Teachers and teaching assistants model sounds in phonics accurately. They address any inaccurate sounds quickly. As a result, most pupils can use the sounds effectively to decode new words with precision. Consequently, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected phonics standard at the end of Year 1 in 2018 was above the provisional national average.
- Leaders, including your special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), have a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs. Leaders carry out checks to ensure that the support pupils need is appropriate and effective. Pupils with

SEND are effectively supported to help them to make good progress in their learning. Consequently, pupils are making good progress towards their individual targets.

- Leaders have established a clear focus on the importance of reading and writing. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher made links between the myths of the ancient Greeks and popular works of fiction such as the Percy Jackson or Harry Potter books. Teachers used questioning to develop pupils' ability to summarise and infer meaning from a text.
- Leaders have reviewed the books used in the school. Pupils now have a range of books to engage their interest and improve their reading skills. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they enjoyed reading and that teachers encourage them to read regularly. Those pupils that I heard read in small groups did so with a degree of fluency, but some pupils found the vocabulary difficult to understand, such as 'treading', 'frolicking', 'horrid' and 'brimming'. Some pupils carried on reading without understanding, rather than checking the meaning of the unknown words. As result, they are not able to read with as much fluency and understanding as needed when tackling more challenging texts. Consequently, although attainment was above the provisional national average in 2018, some Year 6 pupils did not make as much progress in reading as they did in writing and mathematics.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are very supportive of the school. Most are delighted about the progress their children make and proud of the school's reputation in the local community. Comments included, 'Children and their learning are at the heart of this school, where they are all included and encouraged to follow the school ethos, "give it everything you've got" ' and 'excellent, caring school that my child enjoys attending'.
- Pupils are proud to take on additional responsibilities. They speak positively about their roles as digital helpers, sports leaders and members of the school council.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the teaching of reading are sustained so that pupils make better progress by the end of key stage 2
- the most able pupils are being consistently challenged and stretched during lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with your early years leaders as well as your leaders of English and mathematics. Together with you, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and learning and to look at pupils' work. I also looked in depth at pupils' books and other work. I met with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4 to 6. I listened to 10 pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. Consideration was given to the 38 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the six questionnaire responses from staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents and grandparents at the start of the school day. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records. I also met with you as designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe.