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Mr Clem Coady
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Dear Mr Coady

Short inspection of Stoneraise School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are an inspirational headteacher who leads by example in your many and varied roles. You ensure that staff morale is high by valuing all that they do and making sure that everyone works together as a team. You set challenging targets to enable pupils and staff alike to reach their full potential. The school mission of 'living and learning together to care for each other and our world' is very apparent to visitors.

You, senior leaders and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. Your school improvement plans demonstrate the determination of leaders and managers, including governors, to continually strive to make all aspects of school life even better. Governors explained to me that they recently undertook a skills audit. From this, they successfully recruited a new governor so that they can be even more effective in the way that they support and challenge the school.

At the previous inspection in 2013, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching. The quality of

teaching over time is good and continues to improve. This is because you ensure that there are many opportunities to share best practice both across and beyond the school. You and members of the senior leadership team have considerable expertise and work with teachers in other schools to improve their practice.

You place a high priority on training to keep your staff up to date. You ensure that teachers accurately check the progress of all pupils during lessons and that teachers provide bespoke challenges for individual pupils. The impact of this has led to a rise in achievement of all groups of pupils as they move through the school.

Inspectors also asked you to develop more opportunities for problem solving in mathematics. Your deputy headteacher is a specialist leader of education for mathematics, and together you have reviewed how you teach mathematics across the school. This has led to the publication of a book to help teachers, parents, carers and pupils to find calculation methods that best suit individual pupils' needs. Your deputy headteacher is exceptionally innovative in the way he works with teachers to identify opportunities across a range of topics. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' achievements in mathematics across the school.

You were also asked to improve methods to ensure that pupils and staff are clear about pupils' next steps in learning. This is in place and teachers have also developed pupils' skills to check their own work and evaluate how they can improve. Again, the impact has been an improvement in standards that pupils are reaching across different subjects.

You ensure that children get off to a good start in early years. With skills that are often lower than you would expect for their age, particularly in speech and language, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was close to the national average in 2017. Following a dip in results at the end of Year 6 in 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was much higher than the national average in 2017. Similarly, the proportion of those reaching higher standards in each of these subjects was also much higher than the national average.

You have established an inclusive school community where pupils thrive, whatever their needs. You and your staff ensure that pupils develop social and emotional skills to support their academic progress. Pupils clearly love coming to school and this is reflected in attendance, which is consistently higher than the national average. As I talked to parents in the playground at the start of the day, a Reception class child exclaimed, 'I love learning', which summed up the views of other pupils that I talked to. Parents commented on the school's 'great atmosphere, where staff go above and beyond to ensure all pupils strive to achieve their potential'. Parents' glowing comments about you and the staff are much deserved.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, and together with your three deputy designated safeguarding leaders, you ensure that all safeguarding

arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection, the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was clear for me to see.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the deputy designated safeguarding leaders are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you diligently follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I looked at the opportunities for children in early years to develop their speaking and writing skills. Teachers and leaders are swift in their identification of children who need specialist support in developing their speech and language skills. In addition to bespoke interventions, staff in early years provide a raft of opportunities for children to expand their vocabulary and talk about their play. For example, the teacher encouraged children playing with the toy animals in the outdoor area to explain whether they were going to place the animals inside, below or on top of various buildings. Effective questioning prompted children to talk about where they were placing the animals, increase their vocabulary and talk to each other. Displays in early years show how children are encouraged to mark make with paints and using the sand and chalk. This helps them with their basic formation of letters and simple words. Some Reception class children had written a letter of apology to the three bears, which demonstrated how they are using their phonics skills to spell various words and write simple sentences. You and senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to review and adapt the provision to accommodate the varying levels of development of children as they move from early years to Year 1.
- I also looked at how reading is taught in early years and key stage 1. As the subject leader for English, you ensure that there is a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. This is having a positive impact on pupils' performance in Year 1 phonics tests. In early years, children clearly enjoyed consolidating previous learning and then eagerly copied the teacher by pronouncing the new sound 'oi'. They worked with the teacher to look at images to find words with the 'oi' sound such as 'coin' and 'soil'. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively use singing across early years and key stage 1 to embed the learning of new sounds. I also observed teaching assistants providing interventions for Year 2 pupils who had fallen behind with their reading. Pupils skilfully used their understanding of letters and their sounds to work out unfamiliar words. Teaching assistants used questioning to check pupils' understanding of what they had

read, encouraging them to retell the story in their own words and predict what might happen next. Comments from parents included, 'Staff helped me find different ways to get my child to look at books at home', which demonstrates that reading for pleasure beyond school is being promoted.

- You ensure that the curriculum offers an extensive range of learning experiences including trips to castles and to the theatre to see/hear orchestral concerts. Residential opportunities to London and to outdoor education centres for older pupils broaden their horizons. Pupils told me how much they enjoy opportunities to explore places that are different from their local community. You and leaders ensure that all aspects of the primary curriculum are covered and there is an appropriate balance between subjects. A raft of extra-curricular activities and clubs takes place after school, and these supplement and extend pupils' learning. Parents commented on the way that staff stimulate pupils' learning by their 'creative delivery of the curriculum and encouraging pupils to excel in music and art, sport and chess'. Teachers ensure that topics are used to link subjects together and bring learning to life. While pupils show respect for those who may have different beliefs and cultures from their own, their knowledge of some religions lacks depth. You and your staff are highly skilled in finding ways to motivate pupils and prepare them well for the next stage in their education.
- Finally, I was very taken by pupils' behaviour towards each other, the adults around them and towards their learning. Older pupils, wearing high-visibility vests at lunchtime, keep an eye on younger children to provide support if needed. The mural that the pupils have created illustrates what it is like to be a pupil at Stoneraise. For example, it includes the academic challenges, the breadth of extra-curricular opportunities, the 'Pollination Street' where pupils grow their own plants and vegetables from seeds and bulbs, the link with Tanzania and the opportunities to contribute to the local and global environments.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to review and adapt the provision to meet the needs of pupils of varying levels of development and ability when they move from early years to Year 1
- teachers develop further pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions which may be different from their own so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you and senior leaders. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and with you as the designated safeguarding leader and one of your deputy safeguarding leaders. I analysed 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of 20 free-text responses from parents. I analysed the nine staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; pupils' work and their reading books.