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Mrs Dixon
Headteacher
Barrow Island Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Dixon

Short inspection of Barrow Island Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils in Barrow Island Primary flourish because you have created a school where every member of staff is dedicated to helping pupils develop and learn. Staff are very clear about their roles and their responsibilities and have high expectations of what they and their pupils can achieve. Your passion is infectious and this inspires both staff and pupils. The school's ethos is almost tangible. Staff and pupils are one big team, working harmoniously towards ensuring that pupils' personal development and achievement are the best they can be.

You have ensured that staff are highly professional in their approach to their work. There is a very strong collaborative culture throughout the school enabling them to support and encourage one another. They are constantly seeking to improve the impact of their hard work. With your encouragement and support, and the experience of many other members of staff, teachers confidently make good decisions that help pupils to thrive.

A large proportion of pupils join Barrow Island Primary, across all year groups, with social and emotional skills that are underdeveloped for their age. Teachers and support staff are highly skilled in quickly identifying pupils' diverse range of needs and in giving excellent support. Consequently, pupils settle into the school quickly. They feel secure and are happy. In classes, they are able to concentrate on their learning and achieve well.

Under the direction of the school's governors, you have managed the very successful introduction of provision for two- and three-year-old children. The qualities that are clearly seen throughout the rest of the school are also evident in this provision.

The vast majority of parents and carers are very appreciative of the work of the school. They comment on how easy it is to communicate with teachers, other leaders and you when they want to discuss something. Many say the school also provides them with excellent support. Parents feel that their children benefit significantly from the strong partnership between them and the school.

You are constantly striving to improve all aspects of the school because you want the children of this community to get off to an excellent start in their education. You know the strengths of your school and where it can improve. You have successfully introduced the new curricula for English and mathematics. Teachers do not yet teach other subjects to the required depth. Pupils' reading skills are not quite as strong as their writing skills. You are able to explain why the achievement of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is so strong and correctly judge that the progress made throughout the school is securely good. You have ensured that aspects identified at the last inspection as in need of improvement have been addressed.

Safeguarding is effective.

The proportion of pupils in Barrow Island Primary who need additional support or protection to keep them safe is large and rising appreciably. Senior staff consider this aspect of their work to be a priority and ensure that one of two highly trained and experienced leaders is always available to deal immediately with any safeguarding concerns as they arise.

Highly effective safeguarding is based on excellent open and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. If a pupil had a concern, they would confidently discuss it with an adult in school. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in responding to any concerns they may have about pupils' welfare, including safeguarding.

Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns with other agencies which have responsibilities to ensure that children are safe. This includes children who may have gone missing from education.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including the management of information and the recruitment of suitable staff, are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Across the school, pupils make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The progress pupils make in Years 5 and 6 is particularly strong and stronger than in other years. The experienced teachers, who know in detail what pupils need to do to improve, provide activities which help pupils consolidate their learning and then to move on quickly. Teachers have very good

subject knowledge and use assessment accurately to move pupils' learning forward.

- The progress pupils make in mathematics is very strong throughout the school. All teachers adopt a consistent and very effective approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers ensure that pupils have a sound basic understanding of mathematics and frequently reinforce these basic skills through focused activities. Teachers ensure that the methods pupils are expected to use are consistently applied across all classes. Pupils develop confidence in using mathematics to solve more complex problems. The teaching of writing has improved over many years and with it the progress that pupils make in writing. As with mathematics, the basics like spelling and punctuation are taught well and reinforced and there is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing throughout the school. Pupils' reading skills are good, but not as strong as their writing and mathematical skills. Teachers have improved pupils' ability to read the words in a text but pupils are not as skilled at comprehending the author's meaning, especially if it is inferred rather than explicit.
- You considered improving pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy through the new primary-school curriculum as a priority. Teachers have done this successfully. Pupils also engage in a wide range of other subjects including the arts, humanities, modern foreign languages and technology. They take part in a broad range of activities designed to broaden their experiences beyond school and to promote their personal development. Some parents commented that they consider this is one of the many strengths of the school. Pupils' achievement in subjects beyond English and mathematics is good. However, they do not excel in these subjects because teachers do not ensure that they are studied to the required depth.
- Pupils say they love being at school and it is easy to see why. In lessons, teachers create a highly positive learning culture and provide interesting and engaging topics and activities. Pupils are industrious and successful. Their behaviour in their lessons and around school is of the highest quality. This is achieved because staff take great care of pupils and pupils feel valued. They know that they are benefiting significantly from their schooling and want their school to be calm and purposeful. Staff and pupils have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils model the standards of behaviour they expect from others and when they occasionally fail to meet those standards, staff work with great skill to help them put things right.
- There are many aspects of the school that are of the highest quality, including the promotion of pupils' well-being and physical and mental health. Teaching is consistently and securely good. The school's highly positive culture inspires both pupils and staff. You evaluate all aspects of the school accurately. You and other leaders have demonstrated considerable capacity to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to challenge and guide teachers so that rates of progress achieved by pupils in Years 5 and 6 are matched in other years

- they further develop pupils' reading comprehension skills
- pupils study subjects other than English and mathematics to greater depth.

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

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection, we discussed many aspects of your school. We visited classes and scrutinised pupils' work. I met with four members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with pupils during their break and lunchtime. I scrutinised school documents including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and reports provided by the local authority. I examined child-protection information. I took account of 13 responses from staff to an inspection survey. I met with a group of five staff. I considered the views of 17 parents who texted me their comments and one pupil who completed an inspection survey. I spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.