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Mrs Lindsay Burnett  
Headteacher  
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Cumbria  
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Dear Mrs Burnett

### **Short inspection of Montreal CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 January 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Governors and leaders recognise that turbulence in leadership in recent years has slowed school improvement. Following your permanent appointment in 2017, you have shared your high ambitions for the school with staff and governors. You and other governors recognised that there were aspects of the school's performance which needed to be addressed and you have set about doing this. You lead with determination and passion and have put in place a range of measures to raise standards. You have made these changes because your careful checks on learning show that pupils do not make uniformly strong progress throughout the school, including in mathematics and literacy. The local authority has provided support and training to increase the pace of change. As a result of improvements that leaders have made to measuring and checking pupils' progress, you have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The previous inspection report asked the school to improve achievement in literacy and mathematics. You have demonstrated the determination to do this. In mathematics, teachers have improved pupils' abilities to deal with challenging problems. In lessons, staff use questioning well to clarify and address misunderstandings and encourage pupils to revisit their mistakes. Leaders have also changed the way that staff teach pupils how to develop their writing skills. You have improved reading resources across the school and provided additional training for

staff in teaching phonics. You have made these changes because your careful checks on learning show that pupils do not make uniformly strong progress throughout the school, including in mathematics and literacy. The improvements that you have made are at an early stage and there is still more to do to improve pupils' progress.

Leaders have taken steps to improve the skills and effectiveness of middle leaders, providing training and support. In some subjects, middle leaders carry out a range of checks on teaching and learning, including visiting lessons and checking work books. Staff work with professionals in other schools to share good practice. Leaders and governors recognise that middle leaders are still developing their skills in order to have a greater impact on teaching and learning across the curriculum.

New appointments and recent training have enhanced the governing body. Governors provide the right balance of support and challenge for leaders. They use their skills to monitor standards. They keep a close watch on leaders' actions to improve outcomes for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result of their regular monitoring and frequent visits, governors know the school's strengths and areas for development. They have a good understanding of the recent improvements to teaching, including in mathematics and English.

You and your staff place pupils' well-being and safety at the heart of the school's caring Christian ethos. You provide a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment for pupils and all are welcomed. Pupils are taught to realise the school's motto of 'caring, loving and learning together'. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities you give them to care for younger pupils. Across the school, pupils take pride in their work. Pupils say that bullying is rare, and they are confident that adults will listen to any concerns that they have.

The pupils with whom I spoke told me that they value the trips and visits that you plan, including a history trip to York. They enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer, for example 'Young Voices Club', where staff prepare pupils for an inter-school singing event in Manchester. During the inspection, pupils sang beautifully, with skill and confidence.

Parents and carers share pupils' positive view of the school. Parents were keen to tell me how much they value you and your hardworking staff. They appreciate the opportunity to speak to teachers before the start of the school day. Only a few parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. Their responses were positive, matching those in the parental survey which governors undertook this term.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and fit for purpose. You employ an experienced safeguarding consultant to ensure that your school safeguarding practice is of a high quality. You ensure

that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children and you check on visitors to the school. Leaders provide staff with regular training and briefings. As a result, staff are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face.

Leaders keep meticulous records of safeguarding concerns and waste no time in contacting other professionals to seek support for pupils and their families when needed. You are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the help that they need. Through well-planned weekly lessons, staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including online and in the wider community. Pupils told me how much they value these lessons, including learning about mental health and well-being. You teach pupils to talk to a trusted adult if they feel sad, scared or worried. Staff know pupils well and provide a wide range of support for the most vulnerable pupils and their families.

Governors keep a careful check on safeguarding arrangements. They have worked with leaders to improve the school's site security, replacing the perimeter fencing. In school, leaders use regular drills for fire safety and lock down procedures to keep pupils safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. My first key line of enquiry was to check how well pupils learn phonics. This was in response to a decrease in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 assessment in 2018. I found that leaders have taken a range of steps to improve phonics teaching across infant classes. Through checks on teaching and additional training for staff, you have ensured that there is a consistent approach to teaching phonics in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Staff make sure that their teaching matches pupils' abilities. Staff and volunteers listen to pupils read very regularly in school and you have checked that reading books match pupils' phonics skills. As a result of the improvements that you have made, pupils develop their phonics skills well and use these skills to read with fluency.
- My second key line of enquiry was to check how well pupils develop their skills in writing. During the inspection, I found that pupils use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing more interesting to read. This is because leaders have planned a curriculum which enhances pupils' use of language. However, you recognise that across key stage 1 and 2, pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are below the standards that you expect. The checks that we made on pupils' work show that they do not routinely use these skills when writing independently. Pupils, including the most able, make careless errors and do not check their writing for mistakes. Leaders have taken steps to change the school's approach to teaching writing and to develop pupils' accuracy in applying their skills, including spelling. The changes that you have made are at an early stage and it is too soon to see the impact.
- During the inspection, I considered the effectiveness of mathematics teaching in

key stage 2. This was because provisional data shows that pupils' achievement in mathematics at the end of Year 6 was lower in 2018 than previous years.

Leaders have changed the approach to teaching mathematics across the school. Staff give pupils frequent opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. In lessons, pupils use a range of practical resources to secure their understanding of number and place value. Teachers make sure that pupils revisit their learning and practise their written calculations regularly. The changes that you have made are beginning to have an impact. In lessons, pupils are becoming more confident in tackling tricky problems. You are keeping a careful check on teaching and learning to ensure that the changes that you have made continue to raise standards in mathematics across the school.

- I also considered the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils with SEND. I found that leaders have ensured effective teaching and support for this group of pupils. In your inclusion classroom, your specialist teacher provides a stimulating and engaging learning environment which enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils listen attentively to adults and work cooperatively. They are keen to do their best and are proud of their achievements. Pupils were keen to show me their target display and to share the progress that they have made. Your special educational needs coordinator ensures that funding for pupils is used to address their varied needs. She plans provision for pupils very carefully. Staff work closely with a wide range of other professionals including speech therapists and educational psychologists. Across the school, teaching assistants and teachers ensure that pupils improve their skills. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' learning to check that they make good progress. As a result of the improvements that you have made, pupils with SEND make good progress from their varied starting points.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff embed improvements in mathematics teaching so that pupils' progress continues to improve
- they improve pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling and ensure that pupils apply them accurately in their writing
- pupils develop their accuracy in checking their writing for errors and making corrections to improve their work
- they develop the skills of middle leaders so that they have a greater impact on teaching and learning across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders. I also met with a group of staff after school and took account of 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with eight pupils from key stage 2. I visited classes in each key stage with you, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 read.

I took account of five responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and teachers' performance management monitoring. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.