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Mrs Carol Taylor  
Headteacher  
Furness Vale Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Taylor

### **Short inspection of Furness Vale Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 April 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your appointment has heralded a time of change for the school. Leaders have examined the quality of teaching and learning in detail. You have used this insight to bring about change where you identified that improvements needed to be made. The impact of these actions is now evident. Leaders have raised expectations of what all pupils, including the youngest, can achieve. Staff support this vision to vigorously promote the best education for the pupils. Parents and carers recognise that improvements have been made and are firmly supportive of the leadership and staff of the school.

Throughout this process, the best interests of the pupils have been at the heart of your decision making. Leaders have ensured that pastoral support remains a strength of the school. Pupils have been involved in naming the 'Friendship Express', an area where pupils can receive additional support over the lunchtime period. Staff have identified pupils who would benefit from additional support and nurture groups have been established. Older pupils are keen to help younger pupils on the playground. They enjoy being 'Lunchtime Leaders' and organising games for them. They understand what it is to be a good role model.

There have been significant changes in the teaching staff since the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that high-quality training has been provided for all staff. Leaders have checked to see that this has been effective. You are beginning to build

an effective leadership team and all leaders, including governors, are better aware of their roles and responsibilities.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils had sufficient opportunities to research topics independently. This is now evident in classroom practice. Pupils use computers to find out information about the impact of the volcanic eruptions on Pompeii. They describe what they have found out enthusiastically. Younger pupils research the lives of Roman soldiers and use what they have found out to write an informative report. Some pupils continue their research at home as part of their homework tasks. Pupils use their research to write in a range of genres, including biographies and diaries. However, they do not all present these as well as they might.

The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection focused on ensuring that pupils used their knowledge of the sounds that letters make in spelling words. Leaders have organised comprehensive and ongoing training to improve the teaching of phonics. They check regularly to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently high across the school. Pupils are now more responsible for checking and improving their work and their spelling is more accurate. However, pupils in key stage 1 do not yet have sufficient opportunities to use these writing skills more widely.

A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is becoming embedded. Pupils use a range of apparatus to help them to explore addition and subtraction problems in depth. They are able to explain the reasons why they have reached their answers when solving problems. Pupils enjoy the challenge. Parents that I spoke with and who responded to the online survey said that their children were well motivated by the teaching and learning.

Leaders have sought ways to ensure that the school provides a broad range of learning. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the violin and develop their musicianship through playing together. High-quality artwork, such as explorations of the work of Van Gogh or creations of Aztec masks, is on display around the school. Pupils use historical sources well and can write from different points of view in newspaper reports. Opportunities to work with the wider community, such as in a 'Stargazing evening' or by designing a banner for the local railway station, provide pupils with broader educational experiences. However, the curriculum does not yet fully allow all aspects of pupils' knowledge and understanding to be developed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have worked assiduously to ensure that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have established systems so that concerns are recorded systematically and there are clear lines of communication in the school. Leaders have worked productively with external agencies to ensure that beneficial support is in place for the most vulnerable pupils. They have been unafraid to raise concerns and have checked to ensure that these are acted upon. Comprehensive systems for checking staff are in place. Staff training is up to date.

Teachers ensure that pupils understand what bullying is. Pupils told me that incidents of bullying are very rare. They felt that there was always someone to talk to if they were worried or concerned and felt that any incidents of poor behaviour were dealt with effectively. Parents that I spoke with and who completed the online survey agreed that their children were safe in school.

Pupils I spoke with said that they understood that they should only play on computer games appropriate for their age. They told me how they would act if someone sent them an unkind message. The governor responsible for safeguarding has checked to see whether pupils' understanding of how to keep safe online is secure. Pupils I spoke with also understood how to keep themselves safe near water and crossing busy roads.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children make strong progress through their Nursery Year. They are well prepared for the curriculum in Reception and get off to a flying start. Children quickly acquire knowledge of the sounds that letters make. They learn the correct way to write them with good pencil grip. They use this knowledge in their independent play, for example to write a letter to Father Christmas explaining what they would like to receive for Christmas. Careful questioning by staff provides children with the opportunity to think about what they would like to write in the cards that they are making.
- Provisional assessment information indicates that the proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year has increased in 2018 and is now broadly in line with the national average. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Leaders have high expectations for what pupils in key stage 1 can achieve. The teaching of phonics is now consistent across the school. Leaders have made good use of external support to ensure that all staff have good subject knowledge. The school's internal assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' workbooks show that pupils are now making strong progress in phonics. Reading books are well matched to the pupils' knowledge and support early reading well.
- Pupils write with more accuracy. Their spelling and punctuation have improved, and they check their writing more carefully. Pupils in key stage 1 do not have frequent opportunities to use their knowledge and skills to write at greater length across the curriculum. Pupils' handwriting is not always formed correctly. This hinders the fluency of their written work and the quality of their presentation.
- Leaders have brought greater consistency and focus to the teaching of reading in key stage 2. Effective training has improved teaching practice. Provisional assessment information for 2018 shows that the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standard and the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages. Progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 was well above average for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

- Older pupils understand that it is important to eat a balanced diet and can name the major food groups. They can explain the effect that diet has on their health. They understand the importance of regular exercise so that their heart rate is raised. However, there are aspects of the curriculum that are not taught in sufficient depth for pupils to develop investigative skills in science or to explore world faiths in religious education.
- Leaders have evaluated the way in which they use the sport and physical education (PE) premium to ensure that it provides opportunities for all pupils to improve their health and well-being. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities, including tag rugby and lacrosse. Pupils explain with enthusiasm the opportunities they have at school to improve their fitness, such as by running the 'Golden Mile' every day. The youngest pupils receive additional teaching to promote their physical development and improve their control and agility. Pupils in key stage 2 have had the opportunity to participate in a wider range of outdoor and adventurous activities, such as climbing and canoeing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff expect pupils to write in a consistently clear and fluent style
- pupils in key stage 1 have frequent opportunities to use their increasing phonics knowledge to write at length, across the curriculum
- all aspects of the curriculum are taught in sufficient depth for pupils to develop investigative skills in science and to expand their knowledge of world faiths in religious education.

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

Yours sincerely

Hazel Henson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and other leaders. I held discussions with the chair and other members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with members of the teaching staff and analysed their responses to the staff survey. I met with a group of pupils and considered the responses to the pupil surveys. I observed learning jointly with you in the four class bases. I scrutinised, with you and senior leaders, a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of documents, including the self-evaluation document, the improvement plan and

documents related to safeguarding. I observed behaviour around the school during the day. I considered the views of parents by speaking with them before school. I analysed the 25 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.