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Mr Jones  
Head  
Cummersdale School  
Cummersdale  
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Dear Mr Jones

### **Short inspection of Cummersdale School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 April 2017, 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 your school was judged to be good in July 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There is a friendly welcome for everyone as they arrive. You and your staff are committed to ensuring that the pupils receive a high standard of education. Leaders are reflective in their practice and proactive in making changes when necessary. Governors are actively recruiting the right people to enhance their capacity to support the school and challenge you further.

You and your staff have worked effectively to tackle the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They rigorously follow up on areas identified for improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved. You work closely with other local schools, share good practice and access training. Teachers said that they appreciate these opportunities and they work together to support each other. You provide a range of activities for your pupils to enrich their learning. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils so that an increased number are working at a greater depth. The recent visit from the author David Almond has inspired very high-quality writing. Teachers have used the residential trip to Liverpool effectively as a stimulus for the pupils' own exciting mystery stories about a trip to a museum.

The vast majority of parents are very happy with the school and praised the progress that their children are making in their reading. The fantastic display of decorated eggs for the competition on the day of the inspection was an excellent

example of their support. Parents commented on how well the younger children settle into school and how welcome pupils are made to feel when they join the school in other year groups. One parent said, 'We have recently moved to the school and it's everything we want, we're very happy.' Pupils said you can make a friend very quickly at Cummersdale School. A small minority of parents voiced their concerns about the supervision of a small number of children as they leave school at the end of each day. This was raised with you and the governors during the inspection. However, it was not a concern for the majority of parents. Parents said that they appreciate the care and support given to their children and that staff are always available at the end of the day.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak enthusiastically about the new reward system to earn 'Cummersdale cash' instead of house points. One pupil commented that he is saving up so that he can take all his friends to the play park. Pupils are confident and happy. There is a strong ethos of support and encouragement throughout the school. Pupils are proud of their achievements and take pride in their work. One pupil showed me the improvement in his presentation 'I've been practising my handwriting at home!' Pupils said they enjoy the fantastic school trips and the good teachers that help them learn. The older pupils talked confidently about the visits they have made to the local high school and are looking forward to moving on to Year 7, taking with them 'magical moments and pockets full of memories!'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. They enjoy coming to school and know whom to go to if they have any worries. They are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have effectively tackled the reasons behind the high rates of absence for a small number of pupils. You regularly remind parents about the impact that taking family holidays during term time can have on their child's progress. Attendance has improved, particularly for the disadvantaged pupils in school. It is now better than that of other schools nationally for all pupils. If pupils do not arrive in school you make a call to their home that morning to ensure that they are safe. There are a small number of pupils whose absences are due to ongoing health-related issues. You know your families well and parents said that they appreciate the time given by your staff to support them and their children.
- A minority of pupils did not reach a good level of development in the early years in 2016. You have acknowledged that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching during part of the year have contributed to this. Your monitoring highlighted the main focus for the help these pupils would need to ensure that they were ready for Year 1. Your special educational needs coordinator swiftly implemented high-quality focused support in reading for this group. As a result, the majority of

pupils have made rapid progress in both reading and writing. A small number are receiving support from outside agencies for their specific needs. Parents said how much they appreciate the extra time and help the teachers give to their children.

- Your permanent member of staff in the early years has a clear understanding of the needs of the current pupils. Activities are designed to capture their interests and stimulate their inquisitiveness. For example, the work they are doing about 'how things grow' started with the pupils digging in the soil for worms. They are eagerly looking forward to harvesting and cooking the potatoes they have planted, and eating them with butter. Cooperation skills are modelled well by the adults. As a result, there is a calm learning environment within the classroom. Pupils remain focused on tasks for longer periods of time. This supports the learning of new skills and provides the opportunity for greater challenge from the adults through carefully crafted questions. A range of activities provides the pupils with the opportunities to develop their skills independently. The evidence shows that the majority of pupils are making progress towards a good level of development by the end of Reception. However, there are few examples of how you encourage parents to share information from home to enrich the evidence you have gathered.
- Following the dip in results for the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016, you and your staff reviewed how phonics was taught in the school. You have made changes to the teaching of phonics and reading across the early years and key stage 1. The high-quality training that teachers have received has had a direct impact on the progress of pupils. Parents commented positively on the improvement that they have seen in their children's reading. The consistent way that phonics is taught ensures that any misconceptions are quickly identified and swiftly corrected. Pupils are eager to answer questions and support each other with a pat on the back or a 'Well done!' Improvement in the pupils' phonic skills has had a direct impact on the accuracy and presentation of their writing. Pupils also apply their phonic skills when they are reading. Teachers use questions to assess the pupils' understanding of what they have read, for example 'I wonder why...?' or 'What does it mean when...?' Pupils are confident, competent readers. They enjoy reading and finding out about the meanings of new words. The most recent assessments show that the majority of pupils are making effective progress from their starting points. For some pupils the progress has been rapid and the gaps in their knowledge are diminishing.
- You have accurately identified the barriers to pupils' learning and have correctly implemented a range of strategies to tackle them. The improved attendance of disadvantaged pupils has had a direct impact on their progress, particularly in reading and writing. The changes you have made to the teaching of these subjects are complemented by the challenges set through online activities completed at home. These challenges are providing opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills further. The visits and visitors you arrange provide experiences that the pupils then draw on to enrich their writing. The special educational needs coordinator has a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils who receive additional support. The early identification and accurate assessment of their needs ensure that the correct support is in place and that pupils are making progress from their starting points. The governors monitor

these strategies closely to ensure that they are having a direct impact on the outcomes for pupils.

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

You and your leadership team and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- you continue to build on the improvements in the teaching of phonics so that more pupils gain the skills they need to become successful readers who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- you further enrich the evidence you gather in the early years by supporting parents to become more involved and sharing the information as they move on to Year 1.

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

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you and other members of staff. I also met with the chair of governors and two members of the governing body. I conducted a learning walk with you and visited classes where I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I also listened to a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day, spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of the free-text comments. There were 16 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.