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Mrs Sonia Southern
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Dear Mrs Southern

Short inspection of Burgh by Sands School

Following my visit to the school on 21 September 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Your leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your calm, dedicated leadership has guided the school through a period of change. You have tackled effectively the weakest teaching and have raised aspirations to create a culture of ambition for pupils' achievement. This has resulted in the school becoming increasingly popular with both parents and pupils. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that their children are happy at school. One parent describes how staff and pupils greet each other with 'warmth and happiness'. Staff welcome pupils into busy, purposeful classrooms. Pupils say that the excellent relationships they have with staff is one of the school's main strengths. This ensures that pupils enjoy their learning in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Since the last inspection, you have developed the skills of middle leaders, who now take active ownership of their subjects. Staff have developed topics well, particularly in history and geography. Middle leaders provide reports to governors detailing the actions that leaders have taken to improve their subjects. However, we agreed that middle leaders' action plans do not provide enough detail to enable governors to evaluate the impact of action taken to improve the school's provision.

The previous inspection also asked the school to help pupils check and improve their own work. You have successfully introduced strategies such as peer support and checklists to help pupils build their confidence in refining their work. Inspectors also asked the school to improve how pupils are challenged and engaged in class as well as to improve pupils' progress in writing at key stage 1. Although pupils make good progress, we agreed that

further challenge for some of the most able pupils in writing would help some pupils to achieve even higher standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have embedded safeguarding practices so that all staff contribute to the school's culture of vigilance. The staff reflect your openness and drive to ensure that pupils are safe, valued and cared for. Staff are proactive in addressing any concerns. Their swift actions lead to positive outcomes for pupils and these are recorded clearly. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. All staff are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff epitomise the 'it could happen here' attitude, demonstrating the watchfulness described in statutory guidance. Staff have a good appreciation of factors that could affect pupils in their daily lives. Pupils feel safe and are comfortable in approaching staff. They mention adults' swift and decisive response to resolve rare instances of poor behaviour as grounds for this level of trust. Pupils display a clear awareness of how to keep safe, including when online, because of the effective teaching that they receive.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry. First of all, we decided to look at how effectively leaders challenge the most able pupils in their written work. The progress in pupils' writing books is consistently good. The quality of their work is also evident in the writing in their topic books. In the most successful year groups, pupils' work displays a clearly thought out progression in skills development. This is exemplified in the early years foundation stage, where children make great gains in their writing from making simple marks to writing clearly punctuated sentences by the end of their Reception Year. However, staff do not consistently apply this approach in other year groups. Although some of the most able pupils recognise the gains that they make in their written work over time, they agree that their work does not stretch their capabilities frequently enough. In some year groups, the work in books shows that the quality of their work is often similar to that of other pupils in the class. Pupils are engaged in their work and encouraged by the feedback that they receive from adults and peers. However, there are few opportunities to practise and consolidate improvements to their work before moving on to different content. As part of your accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, you have already identified that further work is needed to focus on the quality of challenge for some of the most able children to enable them to achieve the highest standards.
- We agreed to look at how well pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils have a very good awareness of British values. They understand the principles of democracy and took part in mock elections to coincide with the general election. They also elect school councillors. Pupils see this as a prestigious position and candidates present their manifestos to their own class to gain votes, furthering their understanding of the democratic process. Pupils clearly understand what individual liberty means and they respect others' beliefs, opinions and values. They enjoy debating current affairs and they appreciate others' points of view. Pupils' topic books show that they consider the differences and similarities in a wide range of religions. The pupils I spoke to talked responsibly about equalities and how all people should be treated with respect and

dignity. Pupils understand difference and display a mature attitude when considering how family structures differ. They have a good awareness of issues of gender identity. The school's values of truth and unity inform pupils' opinions well because of the way in which staff model these values to pupils.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively staff tailor the design of the curriculum to meet the differing needs of pupils in their class. Teachers' lesson plans highlight individual achievement and identify pupils who require support so that learning is targeted at meeting their needs. The curriculum is designed around engaging topics that allow flexibility to cater for pupils' interests. Teachers make sure that appropriate work is provided for different year groups. Where this is most effective, pupils have opportunities to explore their own learning, such as in a Years 5 and 6 lesson where staff encouraged pupils to extend their mathematical thinking by applying what they had learned to different contexts. Studies of local history, such as the fall of King Edward I, ensure that the curriculum is relevant to pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the way in which teaching assistants question and probe effectively pupils' understanding of their learning. Staff provide successful interventions which build pupils' confidence and skills. Staff log the achievements of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities on a weekly basis and leaders are extending this system to the most able pupils. However, this is in its infancy.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders' plans for improvement provide more precise targets so that governors can more easily evaluate the effect of actions to improve the school
- further challenge for some of the most able pupils enables them to achieve the highest standards in writing
- pupils are provided with opportunities to consolidate their writing skills by applying them in different contexts.

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

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited all classes and spoke to pupils about their work informally during lessons. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding,

including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I discussed a range of topics about the school's provision with pupils, both formally and informally. I watched pupils at lunchtime and reviewed arrangements for safeguarding. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing and topic books. I heard pupils read as part of their work in lessons, including phonics lessons, and support sessions. I reviewed documentation, which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, governors' minutes, schemes of work for a range of subjects, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I took into account 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.