

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 January 2017

Mr Simon Brabant
Headteacher
Storth CofE School
Storth Road
Storth
Milnthorpe
Cumbria
LA7 7JA

Dear Mr Brabant

Short inspection of Storth CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, appointed shortly after the last inspection, you have made sure that staff and pupils continue to feel valued and respected. As a result, everyone works together as a team, determined to improve the school and make it a hub of the village community. Pupils love coming to this school and say that everyone looks after each other. Parents cannot speak more highly of the care and support that their children receive and say the school is like one big, happy family.

You have successfully tackled weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar seen at the last inspection, by making sure that pupils in key stages 1 and 2 have a daily focus on improving these skills. The success of your actions was evident in 2016 when all Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in this test, with some reaching a high standard. You have also improved standards in the Reception class as is evident from all children reaching a good level of development since 2014. Undoubtedly, your new Nursery provision is a significant factor in this success as teachers work well with children to develop their basic skills so that they get off to a good start in Reception.

Your next priority is to improve learning in mathematics. Teachers are not yet confident in making sure that pupils master concepts before moving on. More

support is needed to help teachers to know how to teach skills in mathematical reasoning and solving problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records and information kept in school are detailed and of good quality. All staff know about the changes in the most recent safeguarding guidance and have completed at least level 1 safeguarding training. All staff know about preventing extremist or radical views from their online training on this.

Staff continue to make certain that pupils are safe in school but also to check that pupils have a good understanding of risk through teaching them about dangers outside school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using computers or mobile devices. They know about road-safety risks in the village caused by speeding cars and badly lit or maintained footpaths and they are passionate about wanting to make changes to keep everyone safe. Pupils are confident that there is no bullying at this school. Members of the school council explained their shared responsibility to make sure no one feels left out or excluded from games at playtime. If they see a younger pupil struggling with anything, they offer their help.

Inspection findings

- Teachers are passionate about teaching and enjoy being part of the 'close-knit' community in this school. They plan interesting activities, especially in reading and writing, to engage and challenge their pupils because teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils exceptionally well.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons. They listen to their teacher and each other very well because they are well motivated and want to improve their own skills. Pupils also willingly help each other to improve.
- The broad curriculum provides pupils with a rich variety of opportunities to extend their learning. Pupils say their outdoor learning opportunities, which include gardening and learning how to keep chickens, are 'amazing'. Pupils enjoy learning to play musical instruments including harp and ukulele and they like learning to speak Spanish. They regularly take part in trips such as a cultural visit to London to see the ballet 'Nutcracker' and residential visits to places such as Lockerbie and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- Governance continues to be effective because governors have a thorough understanding of the work of the school – especially the area they each oversee. They ask challenging questions of leaders, review progress information and visit the school to find out about the quality of teaching and learning for themselves.
- External support provided through the Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders is effective. You know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well because your views are validated by colleague headteachers in other schools in the alliance. You make sure that pupils' assessments are accurate, because external moderation takes place through your local cluster of schools.

- You have improved pupils' reading, a key line of enquiry for this inspection, by introducing your new approach to grouping pupils by ability for phonics teaching. Pupils work very well together in their mixed-age groups.
- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at the impact of your work to improve teaching in mathematics. From a joint review of pupils' work in their mathematics books, we found that it fails to provide enough opportunities for pupils to think about their work. For example, they are expected to carry out mechanistic calculations that are all very similar, rather than questions where they need to decide what strategy to use first to reach a solution.
- Information you provide for parents on the school website is not maintained to the same high quality as other information available in the school. For example, delays in replacing policies when new information becomes available means that parents do not always have access to the right information. You took immediate and decisive action to tackle some of these weaknesses during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make further improvements to mathematics teaching to ensure that all teachers become confident in using a mastery approach so that pupils are better able to reach a high standard in mathematics
- they check that information provided on the school website is useful for parents, gives them the information they need to know and that this is kept up to date.

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

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met you, your staff and a group of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I gathered the views of parents by talking to them as they picked up their children from school and from comments in a letter written to me by a parent. I looked at the 30 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, including 19 more detailed written comments, and I scrutinised the eight responses from staff who had taken part in Ofsted's staff survey. The views of pupils were gathered from my meeting with representatives from the school council and from the 21 responses from pupils who had answered

Ofsted's pupil survey. You joined me in short visits to lessons, a tour of the school site and a review of pupils' work in books, which gave me the opportunity to find out about the improvements you have made to teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read and carried out checks on safeguarding information.