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Mr Paul Rusby
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Dear Mr Rusby

Short inspection of Cragside CofE Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team share a strong sense of moral purpose in your commitment to achieve the very best for all pupils and create a vibrant learning community where every child can 'shine bright'. These values underpin an ethos of high expectations where all teachers contribute to a culture of ongoing improvement. You have decisively addressed areas for improvement from the previous inspection through highly effective mathematics teaching and a transformation of outdoor learning opportunities in the early years. You have strengthened whole-school leadership by building a strong team of leaders across different phases and subjects. These leaders continually monitor pupils' progress and share good practice to drive continual improvement. As a result of high expectations, rigorous systems and highly effective teaching, pupils achieve high standards and make extremely strong progress.

You and your teachers have responded diligently to the increased demands of the new national curriculum and associated assessment tasks. As a result, at key stage 2 in 2016 pupils made strong progress and achieved outcomes that were well above those seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above that seen nationally, placing the school in the top 10% of schools nationally on this measure. Similar rigour contributed to good outcomes at key stage 1, although the proportions of middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth were below those seen nationally. You have responded quickly and actions to address this are already

underway. However, further work is required to ensure that these groups of pupils make even better progress so that higher proportion reaches greater depth.

You and your team actively build links with external partners to verify standards, strengthen expertise and improve provision for pupils. You have developed links with Belfast and Durham universities to pioneer developments to teaching and learning and evidence-based research. Your partnership with a primary school outside your immediate area facilitates an ongoing review of standards, with each headteacher holding an advisory role on the other's governing body. Your school holds a series of significant awards, including Artsmark Gold, School Games Gold, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and a challenge award for excellent provision for gifted and talented children. These achievements reflect your passion to provide excellence for pupils in all aspects of your work. The expertise of leaders and subject specialists is sought by other schools and the school has provided support to other primary schools and to a local secondary school on effective transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

The strength of leadership at the school is underpinned by extremely robust procedures and systems. Pupils' progress is thoroughly tracked and reviewed every half term and summaries of progress are shared with teachers and governors. Regular moderation within school and with external partners lends an accuracy to school tracking information. Performance management procedures are extremely rigorous and individual targets are closely aligned to whole-school targets. Senior leaders assiduously record any concerns over pupils' welfare. Curriculum innovations are evaluated and visually recorded in folders to create a tangible record of development and impact. These systems provide a strong platform that enables leaders to carry out their roles with both independence and the knowledge that clear systems of accountability remain. These systems also ensure that leaders and teachers focus upon the impact of developments and initiatives as opposed to the novelty of invention for its own sake.

Your team's commitment to pupils' academic development is mirrored in their commitment to pupils' wider personal and social development. The school's Christian values add a moral purpose that permeates all aspects of the school's work. Pupils understand the school's values and were able to explain the importance of 'letting your light shine' by trying your best and showing kindness to others. Pupils value the extensive opportunities to participate in a range after-school activities, including creating club, sing-up club, cooking club and SATs club. Pupils are also extensively involved in a range of sports, including netball, rugby, tennis, badminton and cross-country running, all of which contribute to the school's School Games Gold status. Pupils also regularly take part in the weekend challenges where they take part in activities such as practical cookery and science explorations. Pupils show consideration and responsibility for others, with parents valuing the opportunities for older pupils to read to children in the Reception class. Pupils appreciate the wider experiences on offer which add to their self-esteem and confidence.

Your links with parents and carers are strong and support a positive approach to learning and an atmosphere of care and support. Parents praise your 'contagious' enthusiasm, 'visibility' at the start and end of the day and that you know all the children by name. These qualities extend to other senior leaders and the entire staff. As one parent wrote: 'Every member of the team at Cragside is to be commended for their devotion to teaching, their care for the children and their efforts to encourage our young people to do their best in all things.' All parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire or talked to me in person enthusiastically recommended the school to others.

Governors are passionate in their commitment to the success of the school. They have the expertise and insight to hold leaders to account for key aspects of the school's performance. Each governor has a key area of responsibility that gives a strong focus to their monitoring activities. You provide governors with detailed but accessible half-termly updates on pupils' progress. Governors regularly review current progress to check the impact of improvement strategies and the use of additional funding. The chair, and vice-chair, of the governing body regularly join senior leadership team meetings to add further scrutiny. Governors are aware that the school's willingness to seek external scrutiny from the local authority and partner schools gives an accuracy and objectivity to performance information. Governors are mindful of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive up-to-date training.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team maintain a constant and intensive focus upon the welfare of pupils at all times. The school's safeguarding processes are exemplary and reflect a culture where actions to promote pupils' safety and welfare permeate all aspects of the school's work. Thorough checks are made on the suitability of adults working at the school. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding seek regular updates on key safeguarding issues and share these updates conscientiously with all staff. Close links are maintained with external agencies to support pupils' welfare. Any concerns over pupil welfare are followed-up decisively and records are assiduously kept.

Pupils feel safe and well supported in school and their parents agree. Governors track pupil welfare with the same regularity and rigour that they pursue academic progress and safeguarding is a fixed-agenda item at all meetings. Leaders invite safeguarding consultants to check the rigour of their policies and procedures and ensure that school improvement partners and visiting headteachers review safeguarding practices. The school's focus on values of kindness and the calm and orderly atmosphere cultivated by teachers supports pupils in feeling safe and secure. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- As a result of strong leadership, effective teaching and continual monitoring and support, pupils have responded well to more challenging curriculum demands. In

the 2016 national tests at the end of key stage 2, pupils achieved strong outcomes. Rates of progress were above those seen nationally, particularly in writing and mathematics.

- The impact of teaching is consistently good across the curriculum. Teachers combine their subject knowledge with the ability to create classroom environments that actively promote good learning. Pupils effectively switch from paired discussion to quiet writing conditions. They have an awareness of their roles as learners, either in predicting why and what will happen next in a text or in applying skills of inference and deduction. Teachers question pupils skilfully to deepen their understanding and engender effective learning behaviours in pupils who are comfortable when asked to explain a response to a question. Pupils have the confidence to routinely share their answers or read their work aloud to the class.
- Teachers and teaching assistants effectively develop pupils' reading skills and achieve outcomes in the phonics screening check that are above those seen nationally. In key stage 2, pupils were seen using their predictive and inference and deduction skills to probe understanding more deeply. Teachers encourage a love of reading, with pupils responding enthusiastically to competitions that foreground the importance of reading.
- Pupils are enthusiastic writers who combine the ability to write in a range of genres with accuracy in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. In their 'wow books', pupils show an enthusiasm to write at length with a vivid use of vocabulary and descriptive devices. In these books, pupils display a particular pride in their achievements. Many of the girls were particularly accomplished in their writing while some of the boys were less assiduous in their handwriting. Pupils discuss grammatical features and literary terms with much insight.
- Pupils achieve strong outcomes in mathematics at key stage 1 and key stage 2 as teachers have thorough expertise which they use to much effect. Work in books revealed that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their computational methods through frequent practice. As pupils progress into key stage 2, they have increasing opportunities to explore more demanding mathematics problems and deepen their mathematical understanding and reasoning.
- While pupils make good progress at key stage 1, in 2016 the proportion of middle-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils working at greater depth was below that seen nationally. Leaders are investing increasing challenge into the curriculum and targeting these groups of pupils through 'aspire' groupings. Initial signs reveal that this initiative is beginning to accelerate progress and increase the proportions working at greater depth. Even so, this needs to remain a key focus for school improvement.
- Leaders and teachers have made rapid improvements to the early years. The indoor and outdoor environments promote highly effective learning, with clear spaces to build, model, cook, role play and explore the natural environment. Inspired by a reading of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', children created their own hotels for caterpillars and further explored the theme of metamorphosis in their models and drawing of frogs. Learning journals reveal signs of good progress and deft assessment. Parents appreciate the opportunity to follow their children's

learning through online learning journals. Provision has consistently improved and children achieve outcomes above these seen nationally.

- Pupils are extremely well behaved and conduct themselves in a calm and kind manner in lessons and around the site. Relationships are strong as pupils feel valued and respected, and this gives pupils the confidence to contribute openly in lessons. Pupils are extremely positive learners as teachers develop their learning roles and skills. This helps them to explore texts, develop their writing and explain their reasoning. Parents value this supportive ethos. As one parent wrote, 'I love that encouraging the children "to shine" and being kind lies at the heart of the school's values and ethos. There is a strong community feel and connection between home/parent. All staff are approachable and caring.'
- Teachers closely track the progress of disadvantaged pupils who made good progress in mathematics and particularly in writing at key stage 2. Teachers are pioneering new approaches as part of an initiative with the Education Endowment Fund. Each teacher has a profile of the needs of the each individual disadvantaged pupil in their class and of the specific strategies that will help them to improve. Current progress information shows that disadvantaged pupils are making much stronger progress, and, in many cases more rapid progress than their peers. Differences in the proportions of disadvantaged pupils reaching greater depth compared to others remain, and disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent than their peers.
- Leaders have a close understanding of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual support plans effectively profile their needs and well-mapped provision supports pupils in making extremely good progress. Published data shows that Year 6 in 2016 pupils made outstanding progress in key stage 2 from their starting points. School information confirms that current pupils are continuing to do so.
- In Year 6 in 2016, the progress of the most able pupils was not as strong as that of other groups of pupils in reading and mathematics. Through challenging teaching and a robust curriculum, the most able pupils are currently making good progress, although further improvement is still needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the proportion of middle-ability pupils working at greater depth at key stage 1 and continue to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils at key stage 2
- continue to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and further diminish any remaining differences in attendance and attainment, particularly in the proportion of these pupils working at greater depth.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your senior leadership team. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I met five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I also held a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I undertook a learning walk with you and your deputy headteacher. I also looked at pupils' work in books and folders. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, behaviour and attendance information and pupil tracking. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record of security and suitability checks on staff. I took into account 65 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 28 free-text responses from parents. I also took into account 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.