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Mrs Helen Murray
Associate Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Murray

Short inspection of Stalmine Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 2013.

You joined the school on a temporary basis in January 2018. The governing body are currently seeking to appoint a permanent new headteacher.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders bring a calm, careful steer to the work of the school. Staff morale is high because you help them to understand what the school does successfully and where further improvement is required. Current pupils are learning well.

Pupils are happy and show positive attitudes to their learning. They arrive at school promptly and their attendance is good. They learn much from extra-curricular activities, including choir and board games. Some parents and carers told me that when the school recently advertised archery sessions, their children raced home eager to enrol. Parents say they would like the school to provide even more such activities.

Almost all parents are very supportive of the school. They say that relationships between staff and pupils are successful. Parents are pleased with the frequency and clarity of communication from leaders. They told me that children settle quickly when joining the school.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching. Subsequently, the quality of the staff's work and leaders' support for teachers slipped. However, leaders and staff recognised the need for improvement and took

action. School information now shows that the quality of teaching has strengthened. Once again, teaching at Stalmine is making a positive difference to pupils' achievements.

Inspectors also recommended that the school improve pupils' progress in mathematics. Following extensive work by leaders and staff, pupils are learning successfully in this subject. Staff make activities interesting, for example using real-life situations to help pupils explore and test out their mathematical understanding. Mathematics lessons are popular with pupils. Even so, you recognise that an important priority is to ensure that even more pupils attain at the expected standard in their mathematics in key stage 2.

In the early years, staff teach children through a varied and worthwhile curriculum, including lots of opportunities to develop their physical abilities. Staff support children to become keen, skilled learners, including in their writing. However, some activities do not make the most of children's talents to think and be creative.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents and pupils have good relationships with staff. Leaders and teachers are vigilant in checking that pupils are safe. Governors, leaders and staff have good knowledge of the local community and what risks exist for the safety of pupils. Staff identify quickly any concerns about pupils' care and protection. The headteacher shares oversight of safeguarding with two other, trained staff. This means that appropriate expertise is always available on the school site, should any concerns arise. Leaders give staff regular training about safeguarding. Leaders keep appropriate records of any individual pupil issues. Leaders know how to link with other agencies to support pupils and their families. Since the previous inspection, governors have invested in new perimeter fencing to make the school site even safer. Office staff check the identity of visitors to the school thoroughly.

Inspection findings

- Teaching is successful and pupils make good progress. However, in the past, leaders did not prepare staff fully for the higher expectations of the new national curriculum and changes to assessment. This resulted in poor standards attained by Year 6 pupils in 2016. Subsequent, determined action by leaders, staff and governors improved the quality of teaching and pupils' learning rapidly. Staff now adapt their work appropriately to the national curriculum. The standards attained by pupils rose sharply in 2017. School information shows that current pupils in each year group learn well in their mathematics, reading and writing. Even so, at times, teaching does not help some key stage 2 pupils attain at the expected standard in mathematics.
- Leaders check the quality of staff's work frequently and carefully. They support staff to gain insights into successful teaching in other schools. Leaders have a clear understanding of what high-quality primary education looks like. They set precise and helpful targets to improve staff's support for pupils' learning. Leaders

make good use of links with the local authority to check their own judgements of the quality of teaching. Staff celebrate and support pupils' work in displays on the walls of corridors and classrooms. For example, staff present much information to show mathematical language and concepts clearly and attractively to support pupils' learning.

- Children in the combined Nursery and Reception class love their time at school. Their achievement is good and improving. Staff support children to learn much from their frequent activities outdoors. For example, holding discussions with children about where they might travel to in their imaginary ship. Staff make good use of a wide range of opportunities to build children's skills and desire to write. Some classroom activities do not challenge children enough in using their thinking skills and their creative abilities. This holds children back from achieving even more.
- Subject leaders are beginning to play a valuable role in assisting the improvement of the school. They now make careful checks on teaching, pupils' work and staff's coverage of the national curriculum. They talk to governors about their overview of different subjects. They know what improvements to make in their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders give subject leaders opportunities to learn from regular links with other local schools. Subject leaders' oversight of foundation subjects is less clear but senior leaders have detailed plans in place to develop staff's work further.
- Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They have improved the quality of their support and challenge to the school since the poor standards achieved by Year 6 pupils in 2016. They know the priorities that the staff and leaders are addressing to improve the school. Governors keep a close eye on improvement by challenging leaders and visiting the school regularly. Governors are acting diligently to appoint a new headteacher for September 2018. During the inspection, governors made good use of social media to encourage parents to tell Ofsted their views about the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 improves further so even more pupils achieve the standards for their age
- activities in the early years give children even better challenge to think and to express their creative abilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I visited each class to observe learning and talk with pupils. We checked a sample of pupils' work. I met with you to review how well the school is improving. We considered information about pupils' attainment and progress. I met with two staff. I met with the deputy headteacher from another school who is working with you to support Stalmine Primary School. I reviewed responses from four staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. I held a meeting with nine parents and reviewed 38 responses from parents to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. I met with four governors, including the chair. I met with your adviser from Lancashire local authority. I checked a sample of school safeguarding information, including your records of checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.