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Mrs Sheila Johnston and Mr Derek Kay
Co-headteachers
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Dear Mrs Johnston and Mr Kay

Short inspection of Trinity School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2019 with Ofsted Inspector Jackie Cahalin and Senior Her Majesty's Inspector Vincent Ashworth, 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 April 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, standards at the school have declined. Teachers did not prepare pupils well enough for the changes to the new GCSE examinations. Therefore, pupils did not develop the skills that they needed to fully access the new-style papers.

You have taken action to improve teaching and learning so that pupils are more prepared for their GCSE examinations. Teachers are using moderation to ensure that their assessment is accurate. Teachers now use this assessment to plan teaching that more effectively meets pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are starting to make stronger progress in their GCSE learning.

You have an enthusiastic and capable middle leadership team. They understand the need for improvement and are keen to bring about change. They fully engage with the new practices and policies that you have introduced to the school. This is particularly the case with the new behaviour policy and the new teaching and learning policy. Middle leaders ensure that their teams are well supported in applying these changes effectively. Consequently, behaviour has improved. Pupils are also making stronger progress.

Pupils are typically well behaved, both in the classroom and in social areas. During learning, pupils are attentive. They engage appropriately in the tasks set and actively listen to their teachers. Pupils listen to each other's ideas with respect and respond to each other appropriately. Despite this improvement in behaviour, there is still a small group of pupils who have difficulty in moderating their behaviour. The proportion of pupils that are excluded for a fixed period is higher than national averages.

Attendance overall is good and in line with national averages. However, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains high. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

You have provided a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Many of these support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A large cohort of pupils in Year 10 are engaged in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils also take part in a number of local charity activities and fundraising events. For example, this year, pupils provided Christmas parcels for a local children's charity.

Governors are very supportive of you. The school has been through a period of decline since the 2016 results. The preparation for the new GCSE examinations was not robust enough. However, there are now signs of improvement. Governors are holding you to account for your actions to bring about improvement.

The staff are very positive. They feel that you provide appropriate training that meets their needs, and they feel valued and supported. They know that their workload has increased. However, staff feel that you do all that you can to keep their workload to a manageable level.

Parents and carers say that their children are safe and happy at the school. They feel that their children learn well and make good progress. They say that pupils' behaviour is typically good and that their children are well looked after.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve progress for pupils through improvements to basic literacy skills. You were also asked to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, there has been a decline in the progress made by pupils in the last two years. There is a slightly mixed picture for disadvantaged pupils, as there was an improvement in their progress in 2017. However, in 2018, the progress of disadvantaged pupils declined. The difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the progress of other pupils nationally has increased.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your effective policies and practices ensure that you have created a culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff are vigilant. They follow up any concerns promptly when necessary. You and your leaders have developed positive relationships with outside agencies to support pupils that need help.

Parents and pupils raised concerns about bullying in the school. You have taken action to address this. Bullying is a high-profile topic within the school. You have introduced peer mentoring so that there are alternative ways for pupils to get help. Pupils that the inspectors spoke to said that bullying did happen in school but that it was dealt with effectively by staff.

Pupils that spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe when they are there. They trust their teachers and know who to talk to when they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- The inspection was based around several lines of enquiry. The first was around how well you have succeeded in improving pupils' progress through the improvement of their literacy skills. Pupils' standards of literacy are improving, particularly at key stage 3. For these pupils, you have introduced a regular '300-word' topic-based writing challenge. This writing challenge helps them to develop their writing skills while broadening their general knowledge.
- Despite the work that you have introduced to help pupils to improve their literacy, pupils' progress has fallen over the last two years. You have acted to bring about improvements to teaching. You and your leaders have introduced a quality assurance process that helps you to accurately identify teachers' training needs. There are regular training sessions for teachers to help them to share good practice. Teaching is improving as a result. This was seen particularly in English, humanities and languages.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out how well you have helped disadvantaged pupils to overcome their barriers to learning so that they make stronger progress. You have put a number of actions in place to help these pupils. You met with some success, as seen in the 2017 published data. However, this was not sustained in 2018. You have not completed a thorough evaluation of how the strategies that you put in place impacted on individual pupils' barriers to learning. Therefore, you do not know which have had an impact and which have not. A review of pupils' books indicates that disadvantaged pupils' work continues to be of a lower standard than that of other pupils.
- I was also interested in what actions you had taken to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. I wanted to see if the proportion of pupils that are regularly absent from school is reducing. You have taken action to address this. Attendance is an improving picture. However, there are some groups of pupils for whom attendance is still below the national average for all pupils. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- The proportion of pupils that are excluded from school is also higher than national averages. You have brought about improvements to behaviour by the introduction of a new behaviour policy. You have also introduced support for pupils to help them to self-regulate their behaviour. Consequently, the proportion

of pupils that are excluded for a fixed period is reducing. However, the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period remains high.

- Finally, I was interested in how well you were improving progress for students in the sixth form. There has been a decline in students' progress, particularly in their A-level examinations. Teachers across many subjects had not prepared students adequately for the new GCE examinations. You have extended the measures that you have taken to improve teaching into the sixth form. As a result, students' progress has improved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress improves, including in the sixth form, by teachers:
 - planning learning that matches pupils' needs
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly disadvantaged pupils, so that they are challenged to make improved progress
- pupil premium funding is used effectively so that the progress of disadvantaged pupils moves closer to the progress of other pupils nationally
- attendance improves, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
- the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period reduces through improvements in behaviour.

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

Erica Sharman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors examined a range of documents, including: safeguarding records and policies; information on pupils' performance and attendance; and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. We met with both of you and other members of your leadership team. I met with four governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. Jointly with school leaders, inspectors observed learning in several subject areas, looked at work in pupils' books and examined the work across a range of subjects of a group of pupils. We spoke formally and informally to groups of pupils from Years 8, 10 and 12. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times. We reviewed

the 232 responses to the pupil survey and the 130 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 74 free-text responses. We also considered 113 responses to the staff questionnaire.