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Mrs Hannah Cuddy
Headteacher
Kirk Smeaton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cuddy

Short inspection of Kirk Smeaton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 December 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 have high aspirations for the pupils in your care and you lead the school effectively. Staff and governors all share your ambition for the school. You have managed the high staff turnover, since your appointment in 2015, successfully. These various staffing issues hampered school improvement in 2016 when outcomes for pupils fell short of the expectations. The strong teamwork you have engendered among current staff has placed the school in a good place to improve further. You have embedded stronger practice throughout the school. Everyone is clear about the expectations you place upon them and you provide effective support to staff to raise outcomes for pupils.

Pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing number are exceeding expectations and working at greater depth. You and your key leaders monitor teaching and learning closely and you have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The procedures to assess pupils' progress and achievements are accurate and reliable. You make sure that teachers use this information to support their planning so that pupils build on their previous learning successfully. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress. Any pupils at risk of falling behind their targets are identified quickly, and you organise additional support to help them catch

up. You also use guidance from external providers, including the local authority, to evaluate the school's performance and inform further improvement.

Governors are regular visitors in school and have a good overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are particularly appreciative of the detailed reports you provide to keep them fully informed about pupils' progress and the impact of any actions taken to raise standards. Governors have the expertise and skills to support developments and question pupils' performance data. They ask searching questions and ensure that funds are maximised to accelerate pupils' progress. They want the best for the school and confidently hold leaders to account for the progress pupils make.

You have brought about greater consistency in practice within the school. Although the teaching team is small, you have delegated roles and responsibilities astutely; all staff follow your good example to make improvements. They have good opportunities to undertake training and share good practice with other schools to extend their skills. Key subject leaders are implementing effective plans to improve the provision for literacy and numeracy so that pupils continue to achieve well. Increased time devoted to reading has increased pupils' enjoyment of books and their better understanding of what makes a 'good read'. The introduction of a new mathematics scheme has already had significant impact. More pupils now exceed expectations, especially in their arithmetic skills.

You expect teachers and teaching assistants to work together to plan activities that hold pupils' interest and enthusiasm. There is strong emphasis on ensuring that basic literacy skills are developed step by step so pupils are secure in their understanding and apply skills confidently. Older pupils in key stage 2, who possibly did not have this level of quality teaching, make occasional careless errors and this remains an area for further work. An improvement area in the previous inspection report focused on greater challenge for all groups and a closer match of work to their various needs. This has improved, but there is scope to improve further. Lower-attaining pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils receive effective support to ensure good progress. Occasionally, one or two pupils working on borderlines between expected levels and greater depth of learning do not receive sufficient support to make the progress they could if challenged further.

Children start in the nursery with skills and knowledge generally typical for their age although there is considerable variation from year to year. Effective teaching results in children making good progress; most meet the expected standard when they move into Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 is often good but occasionally expectations could be higher, in ensuring that pupils work at a greater pace to practise their skills. Sometimes, one or two pupils complete insufficient work to consolidate their skills before moving to new work. When any misconceptions and errors go unchecked, the quality of their work, particularly pupils' handwriting and general presentation, deteriorates. Such lapses are not as prevalent at key stage 2, but expectations of all pupils could be higher, especially in making sure that pupils check their work thoroughly before completion. The proportion achieving the expected standard at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing, and mathematics in 2017 was slightly above average in all but writing; a marked rise on the outcomes in 2016. Pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6, in 2017, rose too, especially for pupils working at greater depth. The proportion working at greater

depth in reading, writing, and mathematics exceeded the national averages. In the relatively small year groups, the underperformance of one or two pupils has a significant impact on pupils' outcomes when compared to national averages.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school takes its duty of care responsibilities very seriously. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and understood by staff and governors. Records of incidents and concerns are of high quality in their detail. Leaders review and revise all policies and procedures related to keeping pupils safe regularly, and check that all staff and governors are up to date in their training regarding safeguarding. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are thorough and logged precisely. All staff and governors know to take prompt action if any concerns arise about any child or their family and report concerns to the designated people accordingly. Leaders follow advice from external agencies to safeguard vulnerable pupils and take prompt action to alert appropriate authorities if concerns arise. Staff provide advice and guidance to children and families on how to stay healthy and safe, and about emotional and mental health.

Governors understand fully their statutory responsibilities to keep children safe. Those governors responsible for safeguarding and health and safety visit the school regularly to check that procedures are followed diligently. You carried out a full audit of the school's safeguarding procedures when you joined the school and made necessary changes to tighten access to school premises while pupils are on site. Staff follow up the absence of any child promptly if parents have not notified the school in advance.

Pupils say that the school is a safe place and parents reiterate this. Parents explained that they have confidence in all staff to take good care of their children and relay any concerns they might have promptly. Pupils said that they loved school and were happy to be there because they felt safe. They explained in detail how staff teach them to stay safe outside school, including about road and fire safety. They know about 'stranger danger' and the risks posed by the internet and social media sites. They explained that you should never post personal details or photographs on websites because personal information could be used to harm you, your family and friends. They know who to go to if they are worried at school or home. They also know that bullying in any form is not acceptable in and out of school and if reported, incidents would be dealt with firmly.

Inspection findings

- The first area we agreed to examine was to consider the data from 2017 and to check that current pupils were making good progress. The 2017 outcomes show a marked improvement on the outcomes in 2016 and strongly indicate an improved picture in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The combined outcomes for reading, writing and mathematics were quite not at the national average at the end of Year 6, in 2017, but not significantly so. An increased proportion of pupils achieved at greater depth in all these subjects. Current pupils in the school are making good progress in all year groups.
- Due largely to the instability in staffing in 2016 and weaknesses in the teaching of reading and mathematics, pupils did not make sufficient progress in that year. By

strengthening teaching and leadership since that time, provision is now good. Pupils' progress is accelerating in all subjects as they extend their skills, knowledge and understanding and become confident learners. Almost all of the teaching is now good or better; consequently standards are rising quickly, particularly at key stage 2.

- The second area of focus was to evaluate the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning. Procedures to undertake these checks are rigorous. All leaders observe teaching and check teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks to identify where teaching needs strengthening. You organise relevant training and support to help teachers improve their practice. You check that teacher assessments are reliable and accurate and analyse the data very closely to make sure all pupils are on track to achieve well against their starting points. Outcomes are rising securely but one or two could be challenged further, especially among the middle-ability pupils who have the capacity to work at greater depth if challenged sufficiently.
- Another inspection focus was to evaluate the quality of provision for mathematics in the school. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was below the national average, with too few pupils working at greater depth. The 2017 overall outcomes improved. While the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was marginally lower than the national average at the end of Year 6, a higher proportion than found nationally exceeded expectations. Inconsistencies are being tackled through stronger teaching.
- The teaching of mathematics is now good. The introduction of a new scheme has already had significant impact on developing pupils' arithmetic skills and mental agility and fluency. Through practical investigation and logical thinking, pupils are more confident in applying what they know about number operations to show that they understand the relationship between multiplication and division and addition and subtraction. Teachers insist that pupils justify the methods they have used to solve multi-step problems and that they check for errors in their calculations. While some find it hard to articulate their thinking, all enjoy the challenge to improve their skills. Pupils understand why the key mathematic principles are so important in their everyday lives and why logical thinking and reasoning are important skills to master.
- Pupils' outcomes in spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting, fell short of what is expected at the end of Year 6 in 2017. The teaching of these skills is high priority from the early years onwards. Most pupils apply these skills confidently and accurately. However, when not reminded by teachers directly, a few pupils make errors that re-occur if not picked up by staff. In pupils' workbooks, there are examples where pupils have not completed sufficient work to show that they have understood their learning fully. These occasional lapses among a few pupils can detract from the overall good progress most make as they move from year to year.
- Staff and governors are all highly committed to the school and its pupils. They want the best for them and to ensure that pupils are prepared well for secondary school. To this end, an engaging curriculum that links subjects together creatively supports pupils' good achievement. For example, they understand how narrative text differs from a scientific report. They explain that reading 'The Diary of Anne Frank' gave them a detailed and moving insight into the plight of young people in the war. As one Year 6 pupil explained, 'it was like a story but it was really real. She was so brave to write it when things were so bad for her family.' Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and

that they 'make you want to learn new things everyday'. Pupils behave well at all times and show great kindness and affection for each other. They are particularly understanding of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and are quick to support them. There is mutual respect between staff and pupils and this underpins the school's well-ordered, welcoming environment. Pupils form trusting relationships with staff, who pupils say are always there to help them.

- Parents are very positive about the school and the good care arrangements to keep their children safe. They praise staff highly and say that the school is a happy place where their children grow and flourish in both their learning and their personal development. Some travel considerable distances to bring their children to this school, saying that 'it has a warm, family ethos which brings out the best in our children'.
- Pupils' personal development and well-being is high priority and all staff are diligent in their care for pupils. Pupils' attendance is good because pupils enjoy being there and want to learn. They are mature in the way they manage themselves in and around school. Most try hard to do their best and busy themselves sensibly when left to work on their own. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and often exemplary. Teachers manage the occasional relapse promptly and effectively.
- Children in the early years make a strong start to their education. Those who join in the nursery are prepared well for their Reception year. Most attain a good level of development at the end of early years. This flying start supports pupils' good progress in subsequent years. Your targets for the school are very ambitious and you have established effective practice to support good teaching and learning. Leaders work hard to make sure that the school is inclusive and that pupils are safe, happy and well cared for in school. Those facing challenges in their lives, including those who are disadvantaged, become confident learners and achieve well through effective support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to challenge all pupils further, particularly those few middle-ability pupils, who with timely support, could achieve even more
- pupils apply their basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately in all their written work and take greater care in their presentation and handwriting
- pupils, particularly in key stage 1, work at a pace that enables them to complete more work and practise their skills sufficiently well before they move on to new learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and all your staff, the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I also met with middle managers and key subject leaders and other staff. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I reviewed documentation relating to pupil progress and achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and examined the evidence therein. I observed pupils around the school including in the playground and the dining hall, and in classes. Together we visited all classes at work and discussed these observations. I looked at books, spoke to pupils about their work and listened to them read. I also met with pupils to get their views of the school and took into account the two responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I considered the views of the 22 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and the 22 text messages submitted by parents to Ofsted. I also considered the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.