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Mrs Margaret Young
Headteacher
Wakefield St John's Church of England
Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Young

Short inspection of Wakefield St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The last inspection took place soon after your appointment to the headship of the school. The rapid impact you were already having on maintaining and building on the strong ethos which pervades the school, motivating staff and providing more opportunities for pupils to make better progress, was recognised then. Since that time, there have been changes to staffing, including middle leadership and governance. You have drawn sensibly on external support and steered the school with commitment and determination through changing times. You have recognised leadership potential in staff and developed a new team of leaders successfully. A very large majority of parents and carers who complete surveys for the school, and of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed. They also agree that their children are happy at the school.

The last inspection highlighted strengths in pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Pupils' behaviour and personal development, and their attitudes to learning, were also singled out as good. All these aspects of the school's work remain strong. The early years provision was also deemed to be effective. This is still the case. Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school. They talk enthusiastically about the many opportunities they have to play a part in the life of the school. For example,

they attach importance to helping out with assemblies and the after-school clubs, and enjoy fundraising for local and national charities. Pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of British values. Links with schools overseas, and the many visitors to the school from different cultural and faith backgrounds, encourage pupils' appreciation of the importance of respect and tolerance, and their insight into global issues such as democracy and equality of opportunity. The good-quality scientific, sporting and musical experiences on offer, and regular opportunities to take part in school concerts, continue to promote, very well, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils apply themselves well to their learning, and a strong work ethic is tangible.

You and other leaders know your school well. You have an accurate understanding of what is working well and why. Leaders have high expectations. As a result, most pupils continue to make good progress, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mathematics outcomes are a strength of the school. Outcomes in writing are rapidly rising and pupils' reading skills are developing well.

At the previous inspection, leaders were challenged to improve teaching even further, and to develop the roles of the middle leaders in checking the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' learning. Since then, you have taken advantage of the good practice in the local 'Outwood Together' group of schools, schools within the Anglican Diocese of Leeds, and of expertise within the local authority to provide effective professional development opportunities for all staff. As a consequence, teaching in the school is now routinely good or better. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Middle leaders now play their part in visiting lessons and sampling pupils' work.

You and other leaders, however, recognise that the school can be even better. You have carefully selected the main priorities aimed at improving the school further. You rightly identify that some of the most able pupils could be making even more progress across key stage 2, particularly in writing. Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books suggest that you and your staff are succeeding in raising levels of challenge for these pupils. You are also resolved to improve further pupils' reading skills across the school, so that they can better make inferences from texts and feel more confident in interpreting particular events and actions. Given recent changes in staffing, you also recognise the need to develop fully the roles of all subject coordinators, so that they can assist senior and middle leaders in checking the effectiveness of the teaching of all subjects across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, governors have restructured their committees and recruited new members to increase the expertise they bring to their roles. Governors question leaders about the school's strengths and drive areas that require further improvement. Governors are ambitious for the school's continued development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe. Pupils, parents and staff recognise and value this. You have successfully created a culture of vigilance when it comes to keeping children safe.

Staff act swiftly and effectively to address any concerns about pupils' welfare that may arise. Staff have taken on board the key messages from the Department for Education's 'Keeping children safe in education'. Staff know families and individual pupils very well indeed. Pupils say that they feel safe. They have full trust in the adults who look after them, and every confidence that any worries they have will be listened to and dealt with.

Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding practice. Designated professionals take timely and decisive actions. They have formed strong links with the local safeguarding children board and bespoke external agencies and services. There are secure systems for checking and recording the suitability of adults to work in the school.

Pupils are supervised well at play and lunchtimes. You make sure that the school site is checked frequently so that any safety issues are resolved without delay. Thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to any trips and visits. You also provide parents with very useful information on the school's website, for example advice about how to keep their children safe when using the internet. You have been successful in reducing the number of overseas visits, made during term time, by families from minority ethnic backgrounds. As a consequence, most pupils attend school regularly.

Inspection findings

- Children in the early years benefit from stimulating experiences that encourage them to share, learn and play together. As a result of the good relationships they enjoy with all the adults, boys and girls make good progress from starting points that are below those typically seen nationally. Disadvantaged children, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who are new to learning English learn well. This is because teaching explicitly focuses on developing key language and communication skills, and lays solid foundations to support children's early reading, writing and number skills. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is broadly average, and a large number go beyond that.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Years 1 and 2. Increasingly effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils quickly learn the sounds letters make. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in Year 1 is rising and close to the national average. By the end of Year 2, most pupils achieve well in writing and mathematics. Reading outcomes are lower, largely due to the growing number of pupils joining the school who are new to learning English and who need more time to develop their skills. The school's information, backed up by visits to

lessons and sampling of pupils' work during the inspection, shows that overall reading levels are improving.

- Across key stage 2, most pupils make at least good progress in mathematics to attain well above average standards by the time they leave school.
- Key stage 2 writing standards continue to rise and were well above the national expected standards in 2017. You and your senior leaders recognise, nonetheless, the need to accelerate the progress of a small number of the most able pupils in writing, to increase even further the proportion reaching greater depth. Work in pupils' books indicates irregular opportunities, from class to class, for all pupils to practise key writing skills for different audiences and purposes.
- Reading outcomes for pupils in key stage 2 are also improving. The visits to lessons that I made with you, and the books that we sampled together, indicate that teachers are increasingly confident in developing pupils' abilities to scan written texts and to retrieve rapidly, and successfully, key information. We agreed, however, that there is scope for more regular opportunities in all classes for pupils to interpret key events and actions in a wide range of texts, and to hone further inference and deduction skills.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers. The pupils I spoke with said how much they enjoy reading, both in school and at home.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who are new to learning English all make good progress from their starting points. This is because leaders meet these pupils' bespoke needs well, both in daily lessons and in small-group work out of class.
- Inspection evidence shows that senior and middle leaders frequently check the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. This is not yet the case with coordinators of all other subjects. You have suitably prioritised the next stage in their development, so that the effectiveness of the teaching of all subjects can be verified on a planned basis.
- The school's records of visits to lessons and sampling of pupils' work indicate that leaders, at all levels, could pay even more attention to the specific gains in learning made by different groups of pupils in response to the daily teaching they receive. During our joint sampling of pupils' books, you and I agreed that not all teachers make sufficient and consistent demands of all pupils to improve their work when it falls short of expectations. Not all pupils, consequently, achieve as well as they can.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers make consistently high demands of all pupils to improve their work when it falls short of expectations
- all the most able pupils make even faster progress across key stage 2 in writing, so that more reach a greater depth by the end of Year 6

- pupils' rates of progress in reading are accelerated across the school, so that higher proportions reach at least the expected national standard by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- the roles of subject leaders are further developed to enable them to check the effectiveness of teaching across the full curriculum
- the skills of leaders, at all levels, are further honed to enable them to record, and share, the specific gains in learning by different groups of pupils in response to the teaching they receive.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swallow
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other school leaders, including governors. I toured the school accompanied by you, visiting most classes. I met formally with pupils and held conversations with pupils and staff through the day. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the Anglican Diocese of Leeds, and met with a representative of the local authority. I met with the school's business manager to review the single central record. I evaluated a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, achievement information and records relating to safeguarding. I looked at pupils' work in their books. I took into account parents' responses to surveys completed by the school and to Parent View, as well as staff's and pupils' responses to the respective Ofsted online surveys.