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Mrs Nicola Dobson
Headteacher
Bolton-on-Swale St Mary's C of E Primary School
Scorton
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Dear Mrs Dobson

Short inspection of Bolton-on-Swale St Mary's C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 December 2015, 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 January 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 created a very successful learning community at Bolton-on-Swale St Mary's Primary School. Pupils are eager to attend and satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Staff, too, work hard to further develop their own knowledge and skills. Action undertaken by staff to develop boys' writing has resulted in exceptionally high standards of writing throughout the whole school. Senior leaders' knowledge and skills are continually developed through, for example, the work they carry out supporting other schools in the local educational community on behalf of the local authority and the Swaledale Alliance partnership of schools.

Over the last three years, overall outcomes have improved in the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The standards that pupils reach in writing are particularly strong and are significantly above those achieved nationally at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The previous inspection identified three areas for improvement. First, to use assessment information more consistently to ensure that work is matched to the needs of individual pupils. Second, to give pupils advice on how to improve their work and clear targets to help them understand how to achieve their next steps in learning. Third, to offer pupils more opportunities to practise and apply their skills in

writing and problem-solving across the whole curriculum. You have ensured that all three aspects have been addressed successfully.

The range of subjects that pupils are taught is broad and balanced. Teachers are adept at planning exciting opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing and mathematics across other subject areas. Pupils' interest in learning is stimulated because they are able to apply the knowledge and skills they have learnt in English and mathematics in other subjects. For example, pupils used their mathematical skills to calculate the economy rate of each bowler in their teacher's cricket team after downloading statistics from the team's website. Boys and girls thoroughly enjoyed this 'real-life' use of their learning. The curriculum is brought alive for pupils through educational visits and a range of visitors to the school.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's assessment information and ask challenging questions of you, senior leaders and middle leaders, particularly in relation to weaknesses identified on the school's inspection dashboard. Leaders at all levels agreed with me that the progress that girls make in mathematics between the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is the school's current key area for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is given high priority in your school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed, refer to the most up-to-date guidance and are fully understood by all adults in school. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so that they know how to keep pupils safe from harm. You ensure that all staff have a deep and insightful knowledge of every child. Pupils report that they feel very safe and are cared for well at school. They are supremely confident that a 'responsible adult' will help them to deal with any problems that they may encounter.

Inspection findings

The governing body has high expectations of staff and pupils and an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors support leaders in their efforts to raise standards further. They challenge leaders appropriately when ambitious targets are not met, and in doing so have shaped priorities, for example in improving the progress pupils make in mathematics. The school's new website is not yet fully compliant with statutory requirements.

The headteacher is ambitious for pupils, for staff and for the school. She is most ably supported by the deputy headteacher who is a specialist leader of education in the early years. Leaders have created a vibrant learning environment in which the breadth of the curriculum shines through and pupils' individuality is recognised. For example, younger pupils, as part of their writing about penguins, learnt about the number of different types of penguin from a Key Stage 1 pupil who has a particular interest in animals that inhabit the Falkland Islands.

Leaders are sustaining a good standard of teaching. Leaders have used their evaluation of the school's strengths and areas of development wisely when appointing new staff. Teachers new to the school have particular expertise in areas the school wishes to improve further, for example mathematics. In visits to lessons throughout the school, the vast majority of learning activities in mathematics allowed pupils to work at just the right level of difficulty to enable them to make good progress in their learning. Although a conscious decision has been made to promote mathematical problem-solving in classrooms, the celebration of pupils' work in mathematics is not as effective as the celebration of pupils' work in writing.

Writing is a strength of the school. Opportunities in Reception for children to make marks and develop their early writing skills are plentiful both indoors and outdoors. The well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils have many opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects. As a result, pupils' writing which adorns the walls is of exceptional quality both in terms of content and presentation. Teachers in all key stages model high-quality handwriting and presentation at every opportunity and pupils respond by producing work of the same high quality.

Pupils behave extremely well. They are proud of their school, are eager to learn and attend regularly. They have very strong attitudes to learning in lessons. Behaviour at less structured times of the school day is equally good. Both parents and pupils agree that there is no bullying in school. Pupils are keen to take on areas of responsibility in school, for example as playground buddies and sports leaders. Older pupils run a book club on Thursdays in their newly built reflection garden. They enjoy reading to younger pupils and best of all helping them to choose books and to read difficult words. Pupils are mature, lively and respectful; they are a credit to their school.

The strong focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates every aspect of school life and has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and the care pupils show for each other and for those less fortunate than themselves.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- girls make better than typical progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2
- the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short, one-day inspection, I met with the headteacher, five members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the Church of England Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales. I visited all four classrooms with you and spoke with staff and pupils about their work and experience of the school. I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics workbooks with the middle leader with responsibility for mathematics. I also scrutinised a range of documents which included minutes of meetings of the governing body, the headteacher's reports to governors and up-to-date assessment information. I took into account 34 responses on Parent View, 10 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 12 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.