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Alex Hope
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Dear Mr Hope

Short inspection of Knaresborough St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

The new headteacher has hit the ground running and has rapidly begun to bring about improvements to aspects of teaching and learning. He has evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. His experience as a headteacher from another part of the country is invigorating staff and widening their perspectives. He is ambitious for the school to become outstanding, has high expectations of pupils and is well supported by staff and governors. Aspects of the school are very strong already, especially pupils' performance in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. Children develop rapidly in Reception and attainment is above average at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Improvement in writing at Key Stage 1, which was a key area for improvement at the last inspection, has been more limited.

Following the last inspection the school was asked to make pupils' learning targets and next steps clear. These improvements have been made. Pupils in lessons regularly talk about their targets and understand what to do next in English, mathematics and science. Pupils often follow up marking by making corrections and improvements to their work.

The school was also asked to tailor questions to challenge pupils, especially the most able. Both teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively. Written

questions are directed well to more-able pupils: for example, a group was tackling a challenging problem to find the lowest common multiple for buying the right number of buns for their burgers. Teaching assistants are deployed well and most have the training and expertise to question individuals and small groups constructively.

Improving the analysis of pupil progress at Key Stage 1 was an area for improvement at the last inspection. The headteacher's new system for tracking the pupils' progress is contributing to a more detailed and accurate analysis of what holds some pupils back, with more precise action to overcome identified weaknesses.

The assistant headteachers and other leaders are making a strong contribution to improving teaching, learning and the curriculum. They model good teaching, lead by example and coach newer staff effectively.

Pupils in all year groups are keen to learn and they behave sensibly and maturely. The quality of dialogue between pupils is good and contributes significantly to their learning, including in Reception. Classes have a productive working atmosphere and pupils of all ages frequently expressed their enjoyment in learning and their keenness to tackle new challenges.

Governors have a well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They have managed the transition from one headteacher to another well. They monitor the work of the school closely and regularly audit the policies and procedures for safeguarding.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding. The school has an inclusive ethos and a good knowledge of the circumstances of individual pupils. Staff consider the support needed for different pupils carefully and tailor provision thoughtfully to meet particular needs. They liaise well with other agencies that are supporting pupils and their families. Records are well managed and organised and dated systematically. A dedicated member of staff coordinates the work with families, agencies and pupils effectively. Almost all parents responding to the online Parent View survey said that their children feel safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The new headteacher has identified key priorities accurately in order to further improve the effectiveness of this good school. He has rapidly begun to implement strategies to improve the curriculum for boys, especially in writing; the use of classroom walls to support learning; the use of computing; the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of data to drive more rapid improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders have a realistic view of strengths and weaknesses and energetically take initiatives in their area of responsibility for year groups and subjects, including science.

- Leaders have established a positive culture for learning mathematics. Well-produced learning resources make mathematics relevant to pupils' lives. Carefully deployed teaching assistants are skilful in leading small groups through engaging tasks. The flexible grouping of pupils helps to meet learning needs identified during the lesson and to stretch the more able. Productive dialogue between pupils enables them to think through problems. Extra help after school supports pupils to crack problems they had not solved in class. Pupils said they love mathematics.
- In Reception, most children show good concentration in well planned, absorbing and imaginative activities. A wide range of resources and games quickly develop children's skills in reading and writing. Adults stimulate effectively children's thinking and talk through their accurate observation and well-judged responses to what children say and do.
- Leaders are tracking pupils' development of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) more closely and adapting teaching more quickly. As a result, current Year 1 pupils are making more rapid progress.
- The new headteacher has accurately identified some inconsistency in the achievement of boys in reading and writing and has made this a school priority. As a result, the curriculum is based more closely on pupils' interests, including those of boys, and more use is being made of computers to support learning. Display walls are providing effective support for learning and the development of pupils' writing. Any weaknesses in the understanding of particular features of grammar are being identified more accurately and taught more precisely.
- The use of pupil premium funding is well targeted to support disadvantaged pupils' learning and development. The sports funding is also used effectively, including the employment of coaches to extend pupils' experience and to develop the skills of teachers.
- Parents' responses to the online Parent View survey were wholly positive and most would recommend the school to another parent.
- The local authority has made a useful contribution to school self-evaluation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should:

- ensure that leaders' well-considered actions result in more consistently good outcomes for boys, and raise attainment in writing at Key Stage 1.
- develop the use of computing to enrich the curriculum.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils during lessons and scrutinised the quality of work in English and mathematics. I reviewed a sample of science books from all year groups.

I made short visits to most classes with you and we discussed our joint observations of teaching, learning, pupils' attitudes and progress.

A wide range of documents were examined, including records relating to assessment, the quality of teaching, safeguarding, governors' meetings and local authority visits. I took account of 64 responses to the online Parent View survey, 12 responses from staff and eight responses from pupils to online questionnaires.