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Mrs Lamara Taylor
Headteacher
Skelton Newby Hall Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Taylor

Short inspection of Skelton Newby Hall Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking over as executive headteacher in September 2012, and the school becoming part of a federation with Sharow Church of England Primary School, you have provided a clear vision to drive the school forward which is fully shared and understood by your leadership team, staff and governors. You set very high expectations and lead by example, ensuring that the school is a calm, purposeful and exciting learning environment.

Parents are extremely supportive of the recent changes in school, both in the quality of teaching and the wider opportunities afforded to the pupils. They overwhelmingly appreciate your and your staff's hard work and commitment to their children.

Most areas identified for improvement since the last inspection in March 2011 have been successfully addressed. Pupils are given pointers so that they can improve their work, and they are acting upon them swiftly. This means that pupils are now applying their new learning across other areas of the curriculum. A great deal of thought has gone into how the curriculum can be used to motivate and inspire the pupils. Due to this, opportunities have been successfully harnessed to use the wide variety of outdoor experiences leaders and staff have available to them. Pupils' involvement in the Treehouse project, and experiences such as camping and re-enactments of jousting, have resulted in more progress being made, particularly in writing, where pupils are now able to write at length at a higher standard. You are

aware that further action is needed to improve numeracy skills, particularly around reasoning and problem solving.

At the previous inspection, the inspector noted several strengths, including the exceptional care, guidance and support lying at the heart of the school's work. This has continued at a very high standard. Pupils trust the adults involved in the school community and know that if they have a problem, adults will do everything they can to help resolve it. Over the last 18 months, the number of pupils on roll at the school has nearly doubled, with pupils arriving over a period of time and with varying needs. Leaders and staff have ensured that new pupils to the school have received that same high-quality care, particularly when they may be feeling vulnerable in new surroundings. When speaking to some of these newer pupils, they told me, 'Everyone here looks after everyone – it doesn't matter how old they are.' Older pupils talked passionately about looking out for younger pupils, and all of the pupils were delighted to recall events which demonstrated that they all feel part of the family of Skelton Newby Hall Primary School.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and the governing body are extremely committed to protecting and safeguarding the children in your care. You have established procedures and practices to ensure that pupils are safe and indeed feel safe. All of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children feel safe.

All staff and governors receive appropriate training, guidance and resources to ensure that they know how to keep pupils safe. Leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training. As a result of this, checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are extremely thorough.

Inspection findings

- You are resolute in your determination to drive continuous improvement across the school. You have created a powerful leadership structure across the Federation which has significantly added capacity, skill and resolve for you to be able to do this. You, and your school leaders, recognise that there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. You are focused on eradicating these inconsistencies by providing a good level of support alongside precise challenge when both pupils and staff are underperforming.
- You and your assistant headteacher have accurately identified the school's own strengths and areas for improvement. You have rigorously analysed a wide variety of information about how much progress pupils are making. This includes information from assessments, looking at the quality of work in pupils' books and observing the quality of teaching and learning in formal and informal ways. Consequently, actions to improve standards are precise, measured and amended swiftly to ensure maximum impact.
- Staff across both schools in the federation are working hard as a team to support each other, and to share good practice in order to improve the quality of teaching. This has impacted most recently in Year 1 and Year 2,

where expectations and standards are now improving in writing. Furthermore, focused activities to hasten the rates of progress for children in Reception are ensuring that they are now learning faster than they were previously.

- Governors have a detailed and accurate view of the school due to your openness about what actions are needed to improve, and the way in which you present information to ensure that all governors understand. They have continued to offer good levels of support and are beginning to be more challenging of senior leaders. However, they have not ensured that the website contains all of the information which is required for parents to access.
- Strategies to improve writing across the school are paying dividends. Leaders have advised the staff on new teaching strategies to strengthen pupils' understanding of sentence structure and grammar. They have also given staff opportunities to look at other classes' writing books across the federation in order to develop their own practice. In addition to this, staff have received support and training to improve their planning, using writing frames and incorporating visual literacy in the form of picture books to support pupils' learning. Along with improvements, more recently, in developing pupils' handwriting skills, it was evident from the work in pupils' books that pupils are making good progress in most classes. Older pupils are making exceptional progress; they are being challenged at a much higher level and leaders recognise that this level of challenge needs to be more consistent across all classes.
- Leaders correctly identified that there were issues around spelling, and pupils' understanding of the patterns and exceptions to the rules. This was because previously they had not been encouraged to think for themselves when it came to using and applying their spelling skills. Now, pupils use a wide variety of spelling strategies and imaginative games so that they remember how to spell common and less-common words, and they are using them very creatively in their work. Pupils are very proud of how much progress they have made in this area and speak highly of this new initiative.
- You are aware that boys do not do as well as girls throughout the school. You have tackled this issue well. Boys are now more motivated to write due to exciting outdoor opportunities provided for them. Furthermore, they are inspired to read more due to the competitive nature of recently purchased software which enables them to strengthen and deepen their knowledge and understanding of reading. Book projects involving a cluster of local schools encourage reluctant readers to open their minds to the delights of reading – and this is working.
- Leaders recognise that more work is needed to improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics. Recent developments have ensured that pupils are more fluent in their mathematical knowledge and rapid recall of facts. However, support for teachers to develop their subject knowledge in mathematics, linked to providing opportunities for pupils to reason and problem-solve, needs to remain a priority. Leaders acknowledge this and have plans in place to address this quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the exceptional practice evident in upper Key Stage 2, which ensures high-quality challenge for all pupils, including the most able, in both English and mathematics, is developed more consistently across the school
- there is a continued focus on sustaining improvement to pupils' achievement in mathematics across the school, by improving teachers' subject knowledge and providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their reasoning skills logically to solve problems
- the school's website is accurate, fully up to date and compliant with statutory requirements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, a representative from the local authority and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I visited all classrooms to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including two joint observations with you. I scrutinised the pupils' work from all classes, including writing and mathematics. I spoke with a range of parents, pupils in lessons and a selected group of pupils about the school. I reviewed information from Parent View and questionnaires for pupils and staff. I evaluated recent information about the progress pupils make across the school and how the accuracy of assessments is secured. I considered the school improvement plans, and other documents including the outcomes of monitoring activities, reports to governors and local authority reports.