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Mrs Patricia Brooke  
Headteacher  
Kirkburton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School  
School Hill  
Kirkburton  
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Dear Mrs Brooke

### **Short inspection of Kirkburton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 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. When you took up post in November 2015, you identified the areas for improvement accurately and developed a clear strategic plan. You have ensured that staff and governors know what the school is trying to achieve and what contribution you expect of them. The school development plan is centre stage and a regular focus for discussion with subject leaders and governors. You, your staff and governors are reflective and check the implementation and impact of actions accurately. Consequently, you have a purposeful and collegiate approach to ensuring that all pupils achieve the best they can.

Pupils enjoy learning in a calm, caring and well-ordered learning environment. They concentrate well in lessons and staff pay careful attention to their individual needs. Pupils say that you are making a difference and they appreciate your regular visits to lessons to check how well they are working. Parents praise your approachability and are positive about the progress and development of their children. Attendance is above average.

The previous inspection report asked the school to improve pupils' achievement in writing. You have introduced a wider range of more creative and stimulating approaches to writing. The teaching of grammar is more specific. In 2016, at key stage 1, children made good progress in writing from the end of the early years. The proportions meeting the expected standard and showing greater development in writing were well above the national average. In 2016, the proportion at or above the Year 5 standard in writing was the same as the proportion nationally reaching the Year 6 standard in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments. This represents expected progress in writing by Year 5 from their average starting points at key stage 1. Year 5 pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics and reached higher standards.

You identified that children in Reception do not enter with strong enough early literacy skills or knowledge of numbers. As a result, you are strengthening links with early years providers. You recognise that not enough pupils reach the required standard in the phonics checks in Years 1 and 2. You are taking effective action to improve the teaching of phonics and the tracking of pupils' progress.

You have strengthened the rigour of assessment by using external markers for Year 5 assessments and by increasing the range of external checks on assessment in each year group. You have adapted assessment well to meet the demands of the new curriculum. Your new system for tracking progress is robust, but at an early stage of implementation. You lack prompt and precise information about the outcomes achieved by your Year 5 pupils when in Year 6 at their middle school. You lack a shared analysis of any weakness in progress over key stage 2 that might inform the teaching of Years 3 to 5 and strengthen transition from Year 5 to Year 6.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your governors have strengthened record-keeping and you now have a well-documented picture of emerging concerns. Staff are clear about the steps in identifying a concern and making a referral. A governor with safeguarding expertise contributes to reflective meetings with staff and helps leaders to check staff understanding of safeguarding issues and procedures. The school's good links with external agencies have led to prompt responses when staff have raised a concern. The designated safeguarding lead rightly challenged another agency when not informed quickly enough about a child protection issue. Pupils say that they feel safe. They were able to talk knowledgeably about how to stay safe on the internet.

## Inspection findings

- Your new system for tracking the progress of pupils is well structured and tightly focused on identifying weaknesses in progress and pupils' potential for faster progress. Meetings to discuss pupils' progress are precise about the skills individual pupils need to develop and the actions that teachers and support staff will take.
- You are outward looking and keen to benchmark your practice against that of other schools. You carry out checks on the accuracy of assessment within school, within the pyramid of schools and with primary schools outside the pyramid.
- Staff match additional support well to pupils' academic and personal development needs. These extra activities increase pupils' confidence and enable them to make progress in areas of difficulty. A calm and purposeful movement group before school is helping selected pupils to develop their physical control and concentration. The school identifies the most able disadvantaged pupils and provides additional support that supports them personally and extends them academically.
- Children enter Reception lacking early reading, writing and number skills. You have started to work more closely with pre-school providers. You plan to offer professional development for providers and to strengthen communication with pre-school parents. Better designed activities for writing and number, especially in the outdoor area, are improving the progress of boys. Early years outcomes improved in 2016 and were just above the national average.
- Past discontinuity in staffing affected the teaching of phonics. The proportion of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils reaching the required standard has been consistently below average. You have reorganised the teaching groups and you are focusing more sharply on each phase of learning. You now have a more rigorous system for tracking progress in phonics. Additional activities support pupils who are struggling. Current teaching in Year 2 is more effective in enabling Year 2 pupils below the required standard in phonics to catch up. Weaker pupils use their phonics knowledge accurately to sound and blend letters and the most able pupils read fluently and with expression.
- Pupils receive good encouragement for reading. The organisation of reading books by different genres helps pupils to choose the books they like and to experiment with other genres.
- Teaching at key stage 1 has focused tightly on the demands of the new curriculum and this has resulted in effective learning in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, attainment at the end of key stage 1 was well above the national average in reading and writing, especially in mathematics. This represented good progress by children with low-, middle- and high attainment at the end of the early years.

- The curriculum provides an effective stimulus for writing at key stage 2. Boys, in particular, were being inspired to write by the story of the Antarctic explorer, Ernest Shackleton. In another example, pupils were formulating questions and a pupil was giving answers in role as a shepherd in the Christmas story. The engaging talking and writing tasks developed pupils' ideas successfully and helped them to find the language for writing a letter. On occasion, language and grammar objectives are not precise enough. A handwriting policy sets out common expectations across the school and is in the early stages of implementation.
- Year 5 assessments in July 2016 show that many are on track to meet the high standard in reading and mathematics in the 2017 key stage 2 tests. Similarly, at the end of Years 3 and 4, three quarters of pupils were working at or above the expected standard for their age in reading and mathematics. Fewer, two thirds, were at the expected standard in writing, which reflects the challenge of teaching the more demanding use of grammar in the new national curriculum.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improved teaching and assessment of phonics leads to more pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics check in Years 1 and 2
- better communication with pre-school providers and parents results in a higher starting point for children's development in literacy and number
- effective teaching of grammar in writing at key stage 2 results in higher writing outcomes
- prompt and precise analysis of pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 informs the teaching of Years 3 to 5 and strengthens transition from first to middle school.

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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I pursued the following lines of enquiry: literacy and number in the early years; phonics; and the teaching of writing. I was interested in why key stage 1 outcomes had improved. I wanted to explore the evidence for good progress at key stage 2. I was keen to find out about your impact, as a new headteacher, in bringing about improvement and whether safeguarding was effective.

I met with you, middle leaders, a group of pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I jointly observed teaching with you and we discussed the learning and pupils' work. I heard pupils read and examined pupils' books.

I checked the school website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, the school development plan and safeguarding records. I took account of 36 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 29 written comments. I also considered 15 responses from staff and 14 responses from pupils.