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Mrs Kathryn McDonald
Executive Headteacher
Carlton and Faceby Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Carlton-in-Cleveland
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Dear Mrs McDonald

Short inspection of Carlton and Faceby Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2017, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

There is no doubt that after the previous inspection, standards of education declined considerably in a short space of time. This was identified by the local authority and the diocese of York, as well as yourself as the executive headteacher when you took up post in September 2015. You wasted no time in halting that decline and, indeed, you have been resolute and determined in your efforts to ensure that the pupils in your care are now getting a good education once again.

You are an exceptional leader; your astute vision, tenacity and ability to remain calm and self-assured under significant pressure has undoubtedly rescued this school from further deterioration. Furthermore, improvements have been rapid, have had dramatic impact, while being underpinned in a sustained manner to ensure that this school continues going from strength to strength under your remarkable leadership.

You have not shied away from making very difficult decisions when managing staff underperformance. On occasion, those around you challenged these decisions considerably. You managed this well. You made these decisions so that pupils in this school could receive a good quality of education and your unfaltering focus on this has paid dividends. You now have a more stable, skilled staffing team, with

plans to develop this even more to improve further the provision and outcomes for all pupils.

You have considerably strengthened the leadership team to aid you in your efforts by distributing leaders across the two schools in the confederation. You have utilised your assistant headteacher, with her expertise for teaching in mixed-age classes and supporting children in the early years, to coach, support, mentor and challenge teachers in this school. This is ensuring that teachers are able to improve their skill and develop the craft of teaching.

During the inspection, I focused on the provision for boys, particularly in phonics, reading and writing, in addition to how much progress the most able pupils are making. You have already recognised that phonics and writing are areas which needed to improve and have started to address them. The governor-led pre-school 'Little Owls' is providing many opportunities to develop early writing skills, and this is being reinforced and developed well as pupils progress through the school. However, strategies to improve phonics are in the early stages of implementation and need to be embedded. Staff can now identify the most able pupils more easily due to having good teaching from an earlier age. Some of the older pupils in lower key stage 2 have some basic skills gaps due to poor teaching historically. Teachers are addressing this effectively now. The next step is to challenge those most-able pupils without delay.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have developed robust and rigorous safeguarding procedures and practices. You have good systems in place to keep pupils safe from harm, and all staff know what to do if they have any concerns about the well-being of pupils. You act swiftly to ensure that staff have training and guidance which is current, ensuring that their practice is kept up to date. For example, very recently staff undertook training following revised guidance from the local authority on trans-, bi- and homophobic bullying, along with new arrangements for reporting and challenging racist incidents.

Inspection findings

- Pupils currently in the school are making good progress. Improvements to the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics are ensuring that more pupils are now on track to reach their targets.
- The implementation of a new topic-based curriculum is developing pupils' skills and knowledge in wider curriculum subjects, for example history, geography and art. Chosen themes inspire and motivate pupils, which is resulting in them developing their writing skills at a much higher level. This is particularly the case for boys. Pupils in key stage 2 were inspired to write diary entries which demonstrated their empathetic understanding when studying Robert Scott of the Antarctic.
- In 2016, not enough pupils attained the nationally expected standard in Year 1 phonics checks. You quickly acted on this and ensured that staff have been

upskilled to teach phonics correctly. You also offered a phonics workshop for governors as well as parents so they can support pupils at home, and you have enhanced the resources available in school. Already, this is starting to have the desired effect. During the inspection I listened to boys reading in Year 2. They have now acquired phonic strategies to read more confidently and fluently.

- Your focus and drive to eliminate the legacy of underachievement for all pupils is ensuring that pupils are now catching up to where they should be, particularly in key stage 2. This is where the impact is most apparent. Teachers have devised action plans to address individual pupils' needs to fill the skills gaps. Focused and precise in-class teaching, as well as the withdrawal of pupils to address key areas of concern, is working. Gaps are being filled rapidly and now more pupils have the skills and ability to accelerate their learning.
- The local authority, the diocese of York and the Swaledale Teaching Schools Alliance have worked closely with you to develop a package of support to aid you to turn this school around. This cleverly dovetailed support has given you the resources and specialist advisers to make the vast improvements which were necessary. In addition, you have not relied on this network solely to provide an independent external view of the impact of your work. You have sought expertise from further afield when necessary to complement this package, for example in developing the early years environment.
- Pupils experience a wealth of additional activities to support their development. Parents are often involved in the running of clubs. For example, all pupils go swimming on a weekly basis and parents help with the organisation of this. The school choir is benefiting immensely from a parent who is a professional in this area. Every Friday, both of the schools in the confederation come together to work on music, writing and a range of other specific activities to develop their social skills, in addition to very focused tasks to close gaps in literacy and numeracy skills. The 'Picture News' project encourages lively debate and develops pupils' understanding about values and morals. Recently, a picture of a wall sparked discussion about President Trump's speech about building walls between countries.
- Governors have been on a steep improvement journey under your leadership. You have challenged them to become more effective and have provided opportunities for them to develop their own skills. A range of training, attendance at network meetings in the local authority, and coaching and support from a national leader of governance have given the governing body the necessary knowledge and confidence so they can now hold you and your leaders strategically to account.
- The stretch and challenge for most-able pupils is still an area which needs to be improved. Many children enter the early years with skills which are above that typical for their age, and not enough of them are exceeding a good level of development. Furthermore, not enough pupils attain the higher levels or achieve a greater depth of understanding by the end of key stages 1 and 2. Senior leaders, including the new leader for mathematics and assessment, are starting to develop plans to address this urgently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to improve the teaching of phonics become firmly embedded so that pupils do not end up with gaps in their skills
- the most able pupils are challenged and stretched consistently so that they can reach the higher levels and acquire a greater depth of understanding. This includes children in the early years.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of York, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

This school is in a formal confederation with Bilsdale, Midcable and Chop Gate CE (VC) Primary School, operating on a different site. The schools share the same executive headteacher and senior leaders.

During this inspection I met with you to discuss the effectiveness of the school and its leadership and management. We jointly observed teaching, learning and assessment in classes across the school. I scrutinised work in pupils' books to consider the progress being made by pupils currently in school. I reviewed school documentation and information, including policies, assessment information, monitoring files and your school improvement plans. I met with three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority and the diocese. I held a telephone discussion with a representative from the Swaledale Teaching School Alliance and spoke to groups of pupils. I met with parents and although there were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, I took account of the responses parents offered by free text. No staff or pupils responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.