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7 March 2017

Mrs Linda Mann
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mann

Short inspection of Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 November 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 and your senior leadership team work hard to ensure that all staff are clear about how well the school is doing, what the school's priorities are for continued improvement, and the roles that they are expected to play in achieving these. You have responded well to the area for improvement in the previous inspection to continue to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in enhancing the early years outdoor activities and experiences.

Staff feel well supported and challenged to make the school even better. They are positive about the many opportunities to share effective practice, plan lessons together, and check the accuracy of each other's marking and take advice from specialist practitioners in other schools. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. You and senior leaders have been successful in emphasising to all teachers and teaching assistants their responsibilities in ensuring that all pupils continue to make at least good progress. Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. The vast majority make good progress in reading, and at least good progress in writing, to reach standards that are average and above average respectively in these subjects by the end of key stage 2. In 2016, mathematics outcomes lagged behind those in reading and writing, but are improving strongly in school due to the good teaching.

Senior leaders share a clear understanding of how well the pupils are doing, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because of the regular and rigorous checks leaders make on how well pupils are progressing. You rightly identify that some pupils, including the most able, could be making more progress across key stage 2, especially in mathematics. You and your staff are working hard to tackle this. However, some pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply key mathematical concepts, or sufficient challenge to explain different approaches to the calculations they make.

Governors are committed and determined to see the school do even better. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. They provide appropriate challenge and support and are increasingly confident in asking difficult questions of leaders. For example, governors have questioned the fall in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in the early years, and have investigated why key stage 2 outcomes in mathematics in 2016 were not as high as those in writing. Governors have also supported changes in teaching and the development of the outdoor environment in the early years. They have also monitored to good effect a change in emphasis on teaching key mathematical concepts in key stage 2.

Governors are aware that some parents are unhappy with the quality of the school's communication with them. Governors are seeking to rectify this but it is too soon at this point to evaluate the impact of this work. Governors also recognise that they need to ensure that the impact of pupil premium and sport and physical education premium funding is reviewed in detail. They know that plans for future spending do not contain sufficiently specific outcomes against which all improvements can be measured.

This has not been the case up to now and so some of the information that the school should publish is not available. Consequently, the school's website does not comply with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what schools should publish on their website.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Staff have taken on board the key messages from the DfE's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and the implications these have within school to make sure that children are kept safe. Staff understand the need to remain constantly vigilant to any signs that children may be at risk of harm. Regular training and updates remind staff about signs of neglect and other abuse, including child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. They are clear about reporting concerns they may have and are confident these will be acted upon by key leaders.

The record of checks carried out on staff meets government requirements.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are able to show that through their own monitoring of teaching and learning they have brought about further improvements. For example, in pupils' writing, effective steps have been taken to improve the range of language that pupils use, the accuracy of their spelling, and the variety of punctuation employed to bring alive sentences and paragraphs.
- Children in the early years enjoy the many exciting activities and experiences wrapped around traditional stories that stimulate early language acquisition and help to develop key phonics skills. The outdoor environment is exemplary. It has been substantially improved since the previous inspection. It contains a kaleidoscope of motivating opportunities for children to explore, have fun and learn through collaborative play. The reasons for the fall in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 have been thoroughly examined and successfully addressed. Enhanced leadership of the early years is providing a strong direction for all of the adults' work, and is promoting high quality learning.
- Pupils are developing a love of reading. The pupils I listened to read demonstrated good levels of fluency and understanding. They said how much they enjoyed the regular opportunities to read, both in school and at home.
- Bespoke small group work and individualised catch-up sessions in the mornings have proved effective in helping particular pupils improve their progress, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Opportunities for younger pupils to work alongside older peers enhance the strong relationships in school, as well as provide additional challenge for some learners.
- Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. You and your staff emphasise that every day's attendance is important. As a result, attendance is above average, and absence and persistent absence rates of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have fallen.
- As a result of good teaching in key stage 2, outcomes in pupils' writing at the end of 2016 were well above average. Outcomes were also above average overall in reading for those pupils who were at your school throughout their key stage 2 years. Elsewhere, in key stage 1 attainment remains above average in reading, writing and mathematics. But you and your staff are not complacent and rightly recognise the need to accelerate key stage 2 progress of some pupils, including the most able in mathematics.
- A high proportion of parents believe that their children are well looked after in school and are safe. They acknowledge the good teaching, and are particularly pleased about the many opportunities for their children to become involved in sport, music, science and enterprise activities. Some parents express concerns about the effectiveness of the school's communication. Not all parents feel that their views are taken sufficiently into account by senior leaders, or feel welcomed into school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- some pupils, including the most able, make even faster progress across key stage 2, especially in mathematics
- senior leaders listen more carefully to the concerns that some parents express and take appropriate steps to resolve issues that arise
- the school's website complies with DfE guidance by including the necessary details about intended spending and impact of the pupil premium and sport and physical education premium funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swallow
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your two assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years lead teacher. I also met with a group of governors. I held telephone conversations with a local authority school improvement adviser and with a senior educational adviser from a local multi-academy trust. I also spoke with parents in the playground at the start of the school day. Together with you, I visited all classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also listened to some Year 6 pupils read. Consideration was given to 29 freetext responses from parents and to 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. Although there were no pupil or staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaires, I evaluated recent pupil (107) and staff (19) questionnaires completed in school during the autumn term. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled some vulnerable children's case files.

The key areas I looked at during the inspection were how effective safeguarding arrangements are, and the progress pupils are making in key stage 2, especially that of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the progress that all pupils make in mathematics. I also looked at the quality of provision in the early years, especially outdoors, and checked whether the good outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 2 last year were being maintained. In addition, I verified the absence and persistent absence rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as confirming the whole school attendance since the start of the academic year. I

looked carefully at aspects of leadership and management, particularly the quality of relationships and communication between the school and parents.