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Mrs Alison Stephenson  
Headteacher  
Sherburn Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Stephenson

### **Short inspection of Sherburn Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 January 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully steered the school through some considerable changes since the previous inspection. This includes the federation of this school and Luttons Community Primary School. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the standard of education the school provides. Staff are committed and dedicated professionals, and also, as pupils say 'very caring'.

You have successfully continued to develop the strengths that were highlighted in the last inspection report. Teaching is now stronger as teachers have been able to share expertise with those at your partner school. Both schools are now overseen by a strong governing body which monitors standards and the quality of teaching rigorously. In such a small school, the federation arrangements have been invaluable in supporting teachers who are new to the school and ensuring that assessment arrangements are robust and accurate. You are gradually changing policies and procedures so that there is consistency of approach between the two schools. You have recently established close working relationships with the nearby pre-school whose children come to the school for lunch. This is helping young children to make a better start when they join the school.

The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, which is a result of the high-quality and up-to-date information it receives. The members of the governing body bring with them a wealth of expertise from other schools, where they hold positions on governing bodies, and from their professional lives.

High expectations of behaviour have been sustained since the last inspection. Pupils continue to have a positive attitude to their learning which, when combined with their good behaviour around the school at lunchtimes, contributes to their good progress. In lessons, pupils work hard and cooperate well. They present their work neatly. They make a positive contribution to lessons and respond to questions or help their classmates if they struggle. Pupils were keen to tell me that behaviour was 'good nearly all of the time'. They were eager to tell me about all the interesting things they do in school. They also told me how teachers take a 'real interest in what we do'.

You have successfully tackled the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection, which was to raise achievement in writing. You have made writing a key focus, concentrating on improving pupils' sentence structure and their vocabulary and giving pupils real experiences to write about. The use of outdoor learning is a good example of how pupils use your rural setting as an inspiration for writing. Teachers have benefited from training, including where necessary individual coaching, to improve their skills for teaching writing. This was apparent in lessons as teachers ensured that pupils answered questions in full sentences and gave examples of good writing techniques to improve pupils' learning. Pupils' writing is now stronger and good progress is apparent in pupils' books, including those of the most able pupils. Pupils now use a range of punctuation in their writing, and use a variety of sentence lengths, and teachers push pupils to use more complex vocabulary than before. However, you agreed that pupils' spelling remains a relative area of weakness.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. A strong culture is established whereby pupils' welfare and safety are at the top of the school's agenda. You and your staff follow up any safeguarding concerns effectively. You work well with external agencies and with any families who might benefit from additional support.

The arrangements for screening and vetting staff who are new to the school are robust. The school site is safe and secure and regularly checked for potential hazards or risks.

The pupils I spoke to understood how to use the internet safely and knew what to do if they received any unwelcome text messages on their mobile phones. Bullying is rare in the school. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those whom I met on the day expressed no concerns about bullying, safety or pupils' behaviour.

Pupils told me how the school had helped them to understand the different kinds of bullying and how they would not hesitate in approaching a member of staff if the need arose.

### **Inspection findings**

- Reading remains a strength in the school. The least able readers use their good understanding of phonics to read unfamiliar words. The most able readers read a wide range of books, which both challenge and interest them.
- Your monitoring of teaching has rightly identified a need to improve writing even further. I saw the impact of this work, which shows that pupils, including the most able, are making good progress. Younger pupils in the school are quickly learning to write increasingly complex sentences using a good range of vocabulary and punctuation. Spelling, however, remains a relative weakness and you have plans in place to address this.
- The outcomes of the 2016 tests showed that girls' progress in mathematics lagged behind that of boys. The work in pupils' mathematics books showed me that there was no particular difference between girls' and boys' progress and that the weaknesses implied in the achievement data from 2016 were due to a very small cohort of pupils in Year 2. Overall, mathematics is taught well, with pupils getting to grips with how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Scrutiny of the most able pupils' books, however, showed that they could make even faster progress if teachers challenged them more in class.
- Over time, the proportion of boys achieving a good level of development in the early years has been below that found nationally. The school is helping children who arrive with different starting points to make good progress in their learning. Teaching for children in the early years is strong, both indoors and outdoors. The key skills of reading, writing and mathematics are developed well through the activities children do. Children currently in the early years are making good progress.
- Through the links with your partner school, you have improved support for staff, mentoring, training and performance management. As a result, teachers have good subject knowledge and constantly improve their practice.
- From the very positive comments I heard from pupils and from the parents I met, it is clear that a harmonious, safe learning environment which enables pupils to thrive has been created at Sherburn School. The federation arrangements serve to strengthen this considerably.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' spelling improves so that it is at least as strong as their skills in using punctuation and grammar

- teachers raise their expectations of what the most able pupils can do and achieve in mathematics in key stage 1.

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

Robert Jones  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and both teachers, four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and five parents. I spoke to six pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 over lunchtime and several others when I visited classrooms. I visited both classes with you to observe learning, to talk to pupils about their learning, to listen to them read and to look at their work across a range of subjects.

I considered a range of documentation, including the 22 responses to Parent View and nine responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered records of the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation, assessment records and the school's summary of its self-evaluation.