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Mrs Jo Jennings
Headteacher
Selby Abbey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Jennings

Short inspection of Selby Abbey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 lead the school very well. You are dedicated to ensuring that all pupils experience the best. You have created and maintain a culture of high expectations in learning and understanding rooted in a set of explicit and regularly articulated Christian values. You are clear that an emphasis on spiritual growth and well-being is the hallmark of your school. You know, too, that there is more to be done. You have shaped a leadership team that is now well placed to improve the service the school offers its children and the wider community even further. Your staff share your vision and morale is high. Pupils are well behaved and enjoy coming to school. They are very proud of the work they do. Relationships between staff and pupils are open and friendly and grounded in mutual respect. Pupils know that they can rely on the staff to care for and challenge them.

The school's previous inspection identified the need to increase the amount of outstanding teaching and to improve the quality of writing across the school, particularly that of the most able pupils. Working with the whole staff, you have addressed these areas successfully. You have reshaped the curriculum and attitudes to teaching and learning. Your curriculum is underpinned by 'Living Faith, Performance and Action and Enterprise'. It emphasises 'real-life' and 'hands-on' experiences for pupils. Pupils told me that they enjoy this approach and the opportunities it gives

them to develop their skills and confidence in learning and in writing in particular. You have put in place robust and systematic ways of checking on the impact of the curriculum. You and your team monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress regularly and carefully. Pupils told me that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They said that this is because they receive frequent and detailed feedback on their learning. You are aware that there is still more to do. You are clear about the need to provide even more opportunities for extended writing in subjects other than English. You and your team also identified the need to raise mathematics outcomes through giving pupils more opportunities to solve real-life problems and thus improve their fluency in applying mathematical skills. I saw clear evidence during the inspection that your work in this area is having a positive impact on pupils' grasp of the link between key mathematical concepts and their application. Pupils were able to talk with fluency about how they used a range of approaches to deal with a knotty mathematical problem. What pupils said was backed up by what I saw in their books.

The vast majority of parents are very positive about the work of the school and hold the school in high regard. They told me that they particularly welcome the ready accessibility of you and your staff because it means that they are regularly updated on how well their children are doing. They said that this is a strength of the school and of your leadership. You are very clear that engagement and partnership with your pupils' parents and families are key elements in raising aspirations. You use a range of imaginative and successful tactics to encourage parents to come into school so that you can update them not only on their children's progress but also how they, as parents and families, can best support and encourage their learning and well-being.

Governance is a strength of the school. Governors have developed a rigorous set of protocols that underpin their regular visits to the school. These visits are carefully focused and linked to the school's strategic plans. Through their visits to the school, governors are able to gain keen insights into its work and make appropriate and informed comments. The school and its governors are well supported and challenged by officers of North Yorkshire local authority and of the Diocese of York.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

You have created and maintain a strong culture of safeguarding. This permeates the whole school. You ensure that there is regular and effective training for all staff and governors to ensure that they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding.

You, as the designated safeguarding lead, have very strong and determined links with the relevant outside agencies. You record your dealings with these agencies in a detailed and meticulous manner. You follow safeguarding issues through effectively and engage with the local authority promptly. As a result, you ensure that any safeguarding issues that do arise are addressed fully and well by a wide range of professionals.

Inspection findings

- I looked at the effectiveness of early years provision to see whether children got off to a flying start at school.
- Children settle quickly into the Reception class because of the meticulous transition arrangements put in place by the early years leader and her team. There are close links with your own as well as the other Nursery providers. Staff in early years have a clear understanding of the range of children's needs as they enter the school from these other settings, particularly in developing children's speech. As a result, plans for each child's learning are well developed. In addition, the school runs regular information events for parents before and after their children enter the Reception Year. These events help ensure that parents are kept informed and underline the importance of open, regular and confident communication between school and home.
- Children are happy and safe and grow to understand and welcome the routines established by the school. The early years environment is bright and engaging both inside and out. Children play and learn well together, developing their skills as enquiring and collaborative learners.
- I also looked at the impact of your actions to deepen pupils' understanding and application of their mathematical skills. Across the school from the Reception class upwards, I saw examples of individual pupils and groups of pupils exploring mathematical concepts in practical ways. For example, in early years, an adult worked carefully using a range of tactile shapes and written numbers to help children see the connection between the two and then ask questions. They used a range of questioning techniques very successfully to ensure that the children really understood the topic.
- Your early years leader spoke to me about the importance of 'Speaking! Speaking! Speaking!' and the way that encouraging pupils to speak in a range of different ways to suit different situations helps them learn. I saw many examples of this and of high expectations by adults of pupils' use of language. This encouraged them to engage with increasingly complex ideas. In a key stage 2 class, for example, I saw pupils working hard, with each other's help, to get to the heart of what was being asked of them in a complex written mathematical problem.
- Overall, I saw many examples of adults drawing out and expanding pupils' skills through deft and tenacious questioning. Staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, moved quickly from asking more mundane 'what' questions to the more challenging 'why' and 'how'. Pupils enjoyed this and the demands it made on them.
- You know that there is still more to be done to reduce further the differences between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils. You discussed with me the wide range of ways and approaches you and your staff have used to remove barriers to learning for this group of pupils. Your work on improving their attendance, for example, has been a success. You have also worked with individuals and groups of pupils, and their families, in developing self-worth and emotional robustness. You have used the pupil premium funding creatively and well to address the needs of your more vulnerable pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils further develop their range of skills by having more opportunities to write at length in subjects beyond English
- pupils across the school continue to have more opportunities to extend their mathematical skills, fluency and knowledge by solving real-life problems.

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

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, middle leaders and with governors. We talked about developments in the school since the last inspection. I looked at safeguarding records and tested out your recruitment and vetting procedures.

I spoke with groups of parents at the start and end of the school day. I held discussions with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked with a representative of the local authority. I also spoke with an officer from the Diocese of York education department on the telephone. I talked to teachers, including a group of newly and recently qualified teachers, and with support staff around the school. I observed an act of collective worship led by Year 6 pupils.

Together, we carried out a learning walk across the school and visited every classroom. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their books. I asked pupils to read to me from the texts they were working on in their classes, and from their work and from their reading books. I observed and talked to pupils at playtime and lunchtimes and I met a group of pupils to talk them about their life at school. I considered the 37 responses on Parent View and 32 free-text comments submitted by parents. I also took into account 32 responses to the staff survey.