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Mrs Sara Binns and Mrs Kate Butcher  
Joint Headteachers  
Hellifield Community Primary School  
Kendal Road  
Hellifield  
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North Yorkshire  
BD23 4HA

Dear Mrs Binns and Mrs Butcher

### **Short inspection of Hellifield Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 March 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your joint headship is effective. You understand the community you serve very well. You are also very clear about the school's place in the community and the service that it provides for local families. Working with others across the school, you have created and maintain a culture of learning and understanding rooted in a set of values that are underpinned by collaboration, high expectations and kindness. You also encourage leadership and responsibility at every level, including that of pupils, across the school. This means that all in the school feel involved and engaged in further improvement.

You monitor the quality of the school's work through clear and effective systems. These systems focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils get the very best. Your assessment of what needs to be done to improve the school further is accurate. For example, you are aware that the most able pupils need to be stretched further so that they extend and deepen their learning and make more rapid progress. Similarly, you are clear that the quality of writing needs to improve, and that there is more to be done to extend the opportunities that all pupils have to write at greater length in subjects beyond English. You work effectively with other schools in the area to assure the accuracy of your and your staff's judgements and to develop staff expertise. You receive effective and carefully targeted support and challenge from officers of North Yorkshire local authority.

The school's previous inspection in March 2013 identified the need to extend your pupils' experience of other cultures and social groups. You have addressed this aspect of your work very effectively. Your pupils are very aware of their place in the world and of their responsibilities to others both near and far. Staff at the school ensure that pupils study and explore other lands, cultures and attitudes. The effective teaching of religious education at the school, for example, enables pupils to learn about and reflect on a range of beliefs and then relate them to their own experience. They not only learn about other faiths but learn from them. The school's extensive charity work and links with other schools in different contexts, both in Britain and across the world, also give pupils insights into what it is like to be somebody else, seeing the world in different ways.

The governing body knows the school and the local community very well. Governors make detailed and appropriate checks on the school's work through regular visits and follow-up discussion. Governors evaluate the impact of leaders' actions and provide challenge that helps to ensure that the school keeps on track. You and, increasingly, other leaders at the school provide the governing body with detailed and carefully evaluated information. Governors use this information and their own direct knowledge of the school to check progress and analyse the impact of your actions. Governors also draw on a range of effective external expertise from officers of North Yorkshire local authority.

Parents are very supportive of the school and of you. They are particularly pleased with the way that staff make themselves available. One parent described staff at the school as being 'very approachable'. They know that you make every effort to encourage all of the children to do their best academically. The parents that I spoke with were also clear that the school gives their children opportunities beyond the classroom to develop the social and other skills that contribute to happiness.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. This ensures that they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You, as designated safeguarding leaders, have strong links with outside agencies. Your records of engagement with these agencies are detailed and show your meticulous approach to this aspect of the school's work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow safeguarding issues through tenaciously.

You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously kept and are of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children settle well into early years. This is because staff are very effective in their engagement with parents. Parents really welcome the school's open communications and the ways that staff work with them to make the children's

move into school a calm and positive experience. Children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress from their starting points.

- The school has good links with local nursery providers. This helps staff quickly identify children's strengths and needs. As a result, staff are able to effectively target their planning of children's activities and so children get off to a flying start in the Reception class. They are happy and safe and have a growing awareness of the needs of others. The learning environment, both inside and out, is stimulating and encourages children to explore, play and learn.
- The percentage of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been improving year-on-year and is now above the national average.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. The proportion of pupils who achieved the standard in the Year 1 screening check has been larger than the national average over the last two years. The school-wide focus on reading is having a positive impact on pupils in key stage 1. The most able pupils in this key stage said that they enjoy reading and discussing the ways the writers use words to create effects for the reader. The least able pupils in key stage 1 are able to use their phonics skills to read new words correctly. Pupils report that they enjoy reading regularly both at school and at home.
- Outcomes at the end of Year 2 are improving. Provisional results for the end of key stage 1 tests taken in summer 2017 show significant improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. These are now at or above the likely national averages. Inspection evidence shows that the efforts you have put in to improving teaching through focused monitoring and rapid intervention have had a very positive impact.
- Similarly, the provisional results for the end of key stage 2 tests in reading, grammar and punctuation, and mathematics show above-average performance. Writing outcomes were not as strong. You are very aware of pupils' comparatively weaker performance in writing. You have taken effective steps to address this through, for example, ensuring that the teaching of writing has a high, whole-school emphasis. The 'writer of the month' awards and ensuring that teaching has a sharper focus on ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to write for a range of different audiences are examples of the steps you have taken. You are clear that there is still more to be done.
- All teachers and teaching assistants are skilled and display high levels of subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. Relationships are good. Pupils feel confident and able to contribute fully to class talk. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and play a key role in the success of the school.
- You carefully monitor the progress and well-being of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Expectations for these pupils are high. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. You also monitor their attendance carefully to ensure that they do not miss valuable time at school. Communications with parents are good.

- Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced range of subjects. However, you are aware that there is more to be done if pupils are to deepen their understanding of subjects beyond English and mathematics. In science books, for example, the space available on many of the worksheets I saw did not give pupils opportunities to write at sufficient length to develop and deepen their thinking. This was particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Pupils are very positive about the school. They enjoy it and are very appreciative of the effort and care that you and your staff put in to teaching them and keeping them safe. Pupils told me that they are safe, feel safe and know how to stay safe. They told me that there is regular training at school that helps them keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. They said that bullying is very rare. They also said that they were alert to the range of forms that bullying can take and what to do if it happened to them or to a friend. They were very confident that adults at the school would deal with any bullying promptly and well.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils across the school have more opportunities to write at greater length for a range of purposes and audiences so that they extend and deepen their skills and ideas
- the most able pupils are provided with even greater challenge so that they make stronger progress across all subjects, especially in subjects other than mathematics and English.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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**

I met with you both to discuss the school's effectiveness and what you have done to ensure that the school continues to improve. I also discussed with you the service that the school offers to children who have SEN and/or disabilities. I met with your colleagues who lead on numeracy and literacy across the school. I spoke with an officer of the local authority on the telephone about his view of the school's progress and capacity to improve. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with groups of parents at the beginning and end of the

inspection day.

I attended an assembly.

I read a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked information about pupils' achievement along with evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Accompanied by you, I visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked pupils' progress in their books. I talked formally with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I also talked informally with pupils in lessons and around the school at lunch and playtimes.

I listened to pupils from Year 2 reading and discussed their reading with them.

I considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the nine free-text comments from parents. I also considered a recent survey of parents undertaken by the school.