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Mrs Elizabeth Turnbull
Headteacher
Bedale Church of England Primary School
Firby Road
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Dear Mrs Turnbull

Short inspection of Bedale Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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 September 2012

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your leadership team have an uncompromising desire for the school to improve and this is clearly reflected in the high levels of attainment and the often very good progress that pupils make. There is a highly positive learning culture throughout the school, and staff take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

Your relentless pursuit for developing the school further and providing the best for the pupils has meant that areas for improvement which were recommended in your last inspection report have been tackled with rigour. Significant work has been carried out to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. This has been done through the establishment of a team of strong middle leaders, who share their good practice and provide support to colleagues. All teachers tailor the work set to meet the needs of pupils, who consequently have developed greater independence in their learning. Your last inspection report also focused on raising attainment and accelerating progress for the most able pupils. Results at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2017 show that the most able pupils are challenged and an above-average proportion of pupils achieve a high standard. In 2017, over one third

of pupils at the end of key stage 2 attained the higher level. Progress measures for the same cohort placed the school in the top 10% of all schools nationally for reading and writing and in the top 20% for mathematics. Year 1 phonics screening results have been consistently high for the past three years and significantly higher than national figures.

Your lesson observations show that the quality of teaching has improved over the past four years and is of a consistently high quality. Teachers provide pupils with clear steps to success, questioning is sharp and challenging, and pupils are given tasks to extend their thinking. For example, in a Year 6 writing lesson, the pupils were asked: 'The smile enveloped her – what do you think that means?' This prompted a discussion about figurative language.

Pupils display highly positive attitudes and are fully involved in the life of the school. In lessons, they are confident and willing to share their ideas. They complete tasks to a high standard. All pupils were keen to talk about their individual targets and explained how these helped them 'to make progress'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding is effective. The recently updated central record of pre-employment checks is comprehensive and meticulously kept. Record-keeping systems for children at risk are rigorous. You, as the designated safeguarding leader, attend meetings regarding these children to ensure that they are well supported in school. All staff take safeguarding seriously and are fully committed to keeping pupils safe and free from harm. They know what they need to do should they have any concerns. You have ensured that staff and governors have received up-to-date training.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they say that there is rarely any bullying. They feel safe and well cared for in school, and parents and governors agree. Pupils know that they can always go to a member of staff for support. Behaviour logs show that leaders and teachers respond with urgency to the rare incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. However, you know you now need to evaluate the impact of actions taken. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe when they are using the internet and were able to describe to me exactly what I needed to do to stay safe online. They show a good awareness of road safety. Older pupils receive 'bikeability' training, which they report helps to keep them safe on the roads.

Governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fully compliant and have completed a variety of training, including 'safer recruitment' training. Parents and carers spoken to all agreed that the school was a safe environment for their children. One said: 'This is an exceptional school because they put care and well-being first.' These views were reinforced on Parent View, where 99% of respondents agreed that their child felt safe at school.

Inspection findings

- You have correctly prioritised spelling as the main area on the school improvement plan, as this is affecting attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. A number of effective strategies have been implemented to improve spelling across the school. Teachers now give high priority to spelling. Pupils are encouraged to adopt the strategy 'if in doubt, circle it out' and then use dictionaries and word banks for support. Staff training has been carried out to help teachers identify pupils with specific problems. Teaching assistant support is provided to help these pupils. All classes have a 'word of the day' and practise spellings on a weekly basis; half-termly tests are used to track progress. The subject leader for English has carried out book scrutinies to ensure that word banks are being used to support writing. Early indications show that these interventions are being successful in most classes. In one key stage 2 class, pupils continue to make basic mistakes, but your senior leaders are aware of this and are providing support.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school achieve well and make strong progress. In 2017, progress for these pupils was high in reading and writing. You explained that the most able disadvantaged pupils are being challenged to attain the highest possible standards. In 2016, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved greater depth at key stage 2 was higher than the national average in all areas.
- The school environment and the many and varied wall displays reflect the broad, balanced and rich curriculum that is provided. The high standards in English and mathematics reflect the priority given to these areas, but this is not at the expense of other subjects. Class topic books show that pupils are effectively covering the national requirements of, for example, history and geography. Links to English and mathematics are appropriate and enhance these areas. School visits are used frequently to enhance learning in the foundation subjects, and pupils said how much they enjoyed these. One Year 6 pupil explained that she was looking forward to her class visit to Whitby and producing a tourist brochure for the town.
- You and your senior leadership team have a comprehensive understanding of the school and the quality of provision. You are well placed to sustain and build upon the high standards already achieved. You were able to describe in detail the targets set for the present Year 6 cohort in terms of attainment and progress. These are ambitious, but reflect the quality of work seen in exercise books. In your school improvement plan you have identified the need to ensure that all pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make at least good progress and reach their full potential, but there are no numerical targets for this group.
- Children make good progress in the early years. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion achieving a good level of development is well above national expectations. Many children achieve outcomes that exceed those expected for their age, particularly in reading, writing and mathematical skills, and in their confidence to communicate with each other and with adults. Children are very well prepared to start Year 1. Work carried out by the early years coordinator and Year

1 teachers ensures a smooth and seamless transition. However, at the time of my visit, outdoor provision did not match that offered inside school. You are aware that more opportunities need to be provided in the outdoor area for the children to develop reading, writing and number skills.

- Overall attendance for the last four years has been over 96%; in 2016/17, the figure was 95.6%. However, you appreciate that 'overall' and 'persistent absence' figures for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were higher than the national average for 2016 and 2017. Figures for the latter group were affected by a small number of pupils who require frequent visits to hospital. In terms of the disadvantaged pupils, you recognise that attendance is a concern and have highlighted it with regard to use of additional government funds. Absences for this group have been rigorously pursued, and figures for the autumn term do show a slight improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan includes measurable numerical targets for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- the early years outdoor area provides children with more opportunities to develop reading, writing and number skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Leeds (CE), 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

Richard Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I looked at pupils' attainment and progress in grammar, punctuation and spelling, writing, pupils' work in topic subjects (history and geography), provision for the most able pupils and attendance data. I held meetings with you, senior leaders, your administration leader, the English coordinator, the coordinator for foundation subjects, the chair of the governing body and two other members of the governing body. I also held a meeting with the school's local authority representative. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, assessment data, attendance data, behaviour records and information about safeguarding and children at risk. I spoke with nine parents at the start of the day and considered 60 responses to Ofsted's

online Parent View questionnaire. I met with two groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group, with pupils from Years 1 and 3, talked about reading and I listened to them all read. You and I visited most classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. During the afternoon, I carried out a book scrutiny and looked at written work from most year groups. I also looked at class topic books containing history and geography work.