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Mr Gordon Stainsby
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gordon Stainsby

Short inspection of Gunnarside Methodist Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You have successfully preserved the warm, welcoming atmosphere of this small school which sits at the heart of its community. Good-quality teaching and learning have been sustained effectively. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school each day and appreciate the broad range of opportunities provided by the varied curriculum that you have designed and embedded. The federation with Reeth Primary School enables pupils to engage in a wider range of learning opportunities. Parents and carers agree that their children flourish within the positive culture that you have established.

Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are accelerating the rates of progress of current pupils across the school. The school team has diligently addressed issues raised at the last inspection, although the quality of some pupils' writing remains variable. Pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills in order to solve problems has improved significantly, as has the quality of teaching in school.

You accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities and have developed appropriate actions in the school development plan. You recognise that some of the actions you list in the plan need more time to embed and that governors keep a close check on the effect of your work on outcomes for pupils.

As a result of the improvements you have made, most pupils are now making strong progress. Teachers use questioning well and the pace of learning secures pupils' concentration in lessons. Pupils respond well to the additional tasks and challenges provided. These extend their knowledge and help them progress well. Teachers' feedback to pupils, in line with the school's policy, clearly indicates how their work can be improved. This helps to deepen their understanding effectively. Pupils have a strong work ethic and show high levels of independence and cooperation in lessons.

As a small school, your teachers know each pupil very well and adapt their teaching skilfully to meet pupils' individual needs. This is exemplified by the good work you do to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Thorough planning, in consultation with parents, has ensured that pupils' needs are well met, allowing them to thrive and make good progress from their starting points. It is also noticeable how kind and caring pupils are to one another.

Pupils are delightfully proud of their school and find it enjoyable. Pupils are considerate of each other, as well as adults, and playtimes are cheerful affairs. The environment is secure and well looked after, with an enticing range of opportunities for play and exploration. The manner in which pupils move around the school is calm and lunchtimes are harmonious.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is excellent. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviours in lessons and during informal times are indicative of the strength of the school's work in this area. Relationships between adults and pupils are enabling and positive.

Safeguarding is effective.

The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains very evident in your school. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff and they leave no stone unturned in their duty to keep pupils safe. The school has a tangible ethos that is positive and caring, putting the welfare and well-being of each pupil at the heart of all that it does. This is clearly seen in the friendly and confident manner of the pupils in school.

Pupils say they feel safe and well looked after. They have complete faith that adults in school will listen to them if they are worried or would like to talk. Pupils do not feel that bullying is an issue. They are confident that any rare issues of poorer behaviour or mishaps in the playground will be dealt with fairly and firmly. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety, including keeping themselves safe online.

Policies, procedures and records are of extremely high quality and are fit for purpose. Staff training is thorough and up to date, including training to ensure that pupils are kept safe from the risk of extremism. Staff have access to well-written policies and guidance and, as a result, have a very secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Parents state their children are safe in school. The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the inclusive, friendly school community is very evident. The school promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development very well, and pupils show high levels of respect for each other, their school and their local community.

Inspection findings

- You are extremely ambitious for all pupils at the school. Records demonstrate that you are diligent in the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress from their different starting points in each year group. Teachers are held to account for pupils' outcomes across subjects and pay progression is tied to teachers' performance.
- Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing. They share your determination for excellence. Effective systems and procedures are in place that allow governors to read reports in good time, prior to their meetings. This helps them formulate key questions to ask leaders. Governors recognise the need to keep a close eye on how well pupils are progressing across the wider curriculum as well as making sure that the school's plans clearly state how opportunities will be provided to further challenge the most able pupils.
- The broad set of skills and experience that governors bring to the school means that you and other leaders, while supported by a knowledgeable governing body, are also challenged robustly and held to account for the progress of pupils. Governors draw on their experiences from other backgrounds to contribute effectively to school improvement. They are each linked to different key aspects of the school, and are involved alongside leaders in monitoring activities. They have well-thought-through plans to become even more effective, in order to support and challenge the staff team further.
- Children get off to a strong start in their learning in the early years. Nursery and Reception children play and learn happily alongside each other, sticking at tasks and maintaining their concentration. Adults support children's learning well. They use effective questioning and provide a range of activities to support children's writing and understanding of number. Reception children were observed happily counting objects to 20 while building a tower from magnetic shapes.
- Pupils get off to a good start in their reading. The systematic teaching of phonics starts in Reception, and continues into key stage 1. Pupils read fluently to the inspector during visits to classes. Pupils read widely and often, and are developing a love of reading. Pupils in key stage 2 are increasingly developing good skills of inference and deduction when reading.
- You have worked hard to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of your pupils and fires their interest through visits to important sites across the region linked to their topic work. For example, areas of study have resulted in visits to York as part of a study on Vikings and Romans. Pupils have also been involved in a lead-mining project, where they worked with an author. Their work was published in a book called 'Lead from Swaledale'. The development of pupils'

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an unmistakeable strength of the school. However, you recognise that teachers need to provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length.

- Teachers' ongoing assessments and monitoring of pupils' successes or misunderstandings in their work allow planned activities to be amended or changed. You are addressing the need for teachers to stretch the most able pupils more thoroughly in areas such as mathematics and writing, although these pupils are still not consistently challenged.
- Leaders' commitment to improve the quality of teaching across the school is ensuring that expectations of pupils are high, relationships are strong and pupils' attitudes to learning support the good progress they now make. Effective use of the pupil premium funding is ensuring that support for disadvantaged pupils across the school is increasingly effective. The progress and achievement of disadvantaged pupils now match or exceed those of their classmates in each year group.
- Pupils' enjoyment of mathematics is obvious. Some pupils informed the inspector that this is their favourite subject. Pupils are becoming more proficient in their problem-solving skills. Good progress has been made in pupils' acquisition of calculation skills and fluency in number.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are greater opportunities for pupils to write in depth, particularly in key stage 2.
- most-able pupils are set work which challenges and stretches their thinking and understanding, enabling them to achieve as well as they can.

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

Geoff Seagrove
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the school office manager. You and I visited lessons in each key stage. I met with five members of the governing body and the school's local authority improvement partner. I spoke with pupils about their work and their views of the school. I listened to pupils read and looked in workbooks with you, when in lessons. A range of documents were considered

relating to safeguarding and external evaluations of the school. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in the 2017 statutory assessments, responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the school's website.