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Mrs Carolyn Booth
Headteacher
South Crosland Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School
Moor Lane
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Dear Mrs Booth

Short inspection of South Crosland Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 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 ensured that the school's core values are alive in all aspects of school life. During the inspection, pupils, parents, carers and teachers gave examples of how 'friendship, forgiveness, honesty and respect' are lived out in the school community.

Your leadership is strong and inclusive. You ensure that leaders are given space to develop and become increasingly effective, and you have given them every support to do so. For example, as a result of the deputy headteacher's incisive and bold leadership of writing, the progress that pupils are making and the standards that they are reaching in this subject are improving strongly.

Your school is a caring and nurturing place where pupils feel safe. Parents are glad to entrust you with the education of their children. Pupils work very hard in lessons and focus really well on their work. They listen intently in class and work together well. They work with you to ensure that the school is a welcoming and harmonious place. For example, Year 6 pupils buddy up with Year 3 pupils to make sure that there is someone checking that they have friends and feel safe. Parents agree that the school is supportive. 'All staff show dedication and understanding,' and 'the headteacher listens to the concerns of parents' typify comments that parents make.

You have developed an interesting and effective curriculum. When you noticed that

some pupils had gaps in their phonics knowledge, you altered the structure of the school day to include a wide range of catch-up opportunities in the afternoon. Pupils told me about the 'four bells' system in which four different groups of pupils grapple with aspects of phonics at four increasingly complex levels. They appreciate this system and understand it fully. Your focus on foundation subjects (subjects other than English, mathematics and science) is particularly strong. You and other staff put a high priority on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects. Pupils told me that they particularly enjoy physical education (PE), art, and design and technology.

Teaching and learning are characterised by teachers' engaging presentation of new material and a high level of focus on the part of the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants listen intently to pupils' answers and check their understanding well. They then shape questions and activities 'in real time' to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding. Teaching assistants help individuals and groups and are guided well by class teachers. They work as a team with other volunteers, such as adults who listen to pupils read ('reading friends'), to help pupils to make strong progress. Your programme of professional development for staff is tailored both to their needs and to the school development priorities. As a result, staff morale is high.

You and your team have been addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result of effective planning and an intelligent use of resources, achievement continues to rise for disadvantaged pupils. Members of the governing body check the impact of additional resources being used for this group of pupils. Improving the quality of teaching is at the heart of school improvement planning, and staff development is important to you. As a result, staff are committed to continually developing the craft of teaching at school, and the quality of planning and lesson delivery continues to rise.

You are aware that the rate of pupils' progress in writing is not strong enough, but changes that have been made are starting to have a positive impact. You have rightly identified that some pupils need even more challenge to ensure that a greater proportion reach higher standards, particularly those with average attainment. Improvement planning, although in place, is not sharp enough to pinpoint exactly where pupils are in their learning, and exactly what success would look like for them.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safeguarding and care is evident in the school. Policies and procedures used to keep pupils safe are effective and fit for purpose. Staff training is up to date. There is tenacity around ensuring that more vulnerable pupils are supported, and the school is proactive in working with outside agencies in order to keep the most vulnerable students safe and secure.

Pupils were able to tell me about the many different ways in which the school helps them keep safe. They told me about the recent visit of the 'Huddersfield Giants' and how this visit helped to remind them about e-safety. They told me about how to keep safe on the roads, in addition to their learning how to stay safe when using

electricity.

Pupils say that behaviour at school is very good, and that pupils are caring towards each other. I saw this during my visit, and members of staff and parents agree. Pupils run events and activities to help others. For example, the 'School Sports Organising Crew' recently ran a basketball shoot-out. You and the pupils have recently begun your annual Lenten 'HOPE' initiative (helping other people everywhere), in which pupils make items to sell, and choose which charities will benefit. The school council supports life at school, door monitors ensure that pupils move around the building in an orderly fashion, play leaders ensure that everyone is included, and the weekly 'marvellous manners' competition encourages a respectful atmosphere at lunchtime. All of these activities help create a tangible culture of care and respect across the school.

Inspection findings

- The progress that pupils make in writing and the standards that they reach are both improving strongly. The deputy headteacher has successfully knitted together a programme of staff development, improvement in classroom practice, and an intelligent use of progress information. This cohesive approach, based on evidence gathered from observations in school and research from other schools, is having a positive impact. A focus on writing in other subjects is also supporting this improvement. Pupils write at length and with accuracy in many different subjects, including history, geography, science and religious education. The teacher with responsibility for writing across the curriculum has ensured that no text type is used in subjects other than English that has not already been covered in literacy lessons. Pupils, therefore, are not asked to write in styles that they have not explicitly been taught before. This example of a keen eye for detail is particularly evident in this area of school life.
- There is a focus on the development of reading at school. Teachers choose texts to use in lessons that are interesting and challenging. Pupils say that they enjoy reading. You use information about pupils' progress effectively to identify those pupils that need extra support and help in their reading, and your 'reading friends' help instil a love of reading in pupils.
- One of my areas of focus was finding out about the extent to which pupils with average attainment make strong progress. Your curriculum inspires these pupils. Pupils are taught discrete lessons in the foundation subjects in the afternoon, and they say that they enjoy these. Effective planning, and fun activities which develop subject-specific knowledge, are helping pupils with average attainment to make strong progress. You have also created some additional sessions in English and mathematics in Year 6 to support more of these pupils to reach higher standards in national tests. You told me that the progress of pupils with average attainment is a focus this year.
- Governors are committed to the school and have an increasingly strong understanding of the standards pupils are reaching. I discussed with them, and with other school leaders, plans for making the school even better. Governors agree that improvement planning could be developed in order to have an even

greater impact on the quality of education offered and the progress that pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve
- teachers continue to provide even more challenge to all pupils, and particularly those with average attainment, to ensure that a greater proportion reach higher standards
- improvement planning is sharpened by making clear what the end goals are, exactly how leaders are going to ensure that these are reached, and what success looks like at different points on the way.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools' commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of this inspection, I explored the actions that leaders, including governors, are taking to improve the rates of progress that pupils are making in writing. I also looked at initiatives to further improve the standards that pupils reach in reading. I considered the extent to which the curriculum is supporting pupils make strong progress, particularly those with average attainment. In addition, I looked at the strength of governance and the extent to which leaders have an eye for detail in school improvement. I looked at the extent to which leaders ensure that pupils are safe at school and learn to keep themselves safe.

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of the leadership team. I also met with seven members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I discussed the school's journey of improvement with a representative of the local authority. I observed teaching and learning with the deputy headteacher. I spoke to two groups of pupils at lunchtime and spoke to others at breaktime. I reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and from a variety of subjects. You presented information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation document and the school development plan. We discussed the arrangements for checking the performance of teachers. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website. I considered the 48 responses to Ofsted's online

questionnaire (Parent View), and the eight responses to the staff questionnaire. I spoke to a group of parents at the beginning of the school day.