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Julie Wright  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wright

### **Short inspection of Parson Cross Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 May 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Yours is a school that has seen some turbulence in staffing and leadership in recent years. However, under your leadership the school is now stable, and has capacity to improve further, both strongly and quickly.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have developed a shared vision for the school. You, together with an effective governing body, and ably supported by your new assistant headteachers, have correctly identified the strengths of your school, and the areas which need further development. Everyone is working together to ensure that the education on offer for the pupils in your care is of the highest quality. Pupils at your school are 'valued and inspired to flourish both academically and personally', and you are increasingly successful in 'discovering the little spark of genius in everyone'.

You are a compassionate leader with high expectations of your staff and the pupils in your care. You lead by example, having transformed the teaching of mathematics at school. You want to develop the leadership skills of your staff, and they appreciate your inclusive style. Parents and carers see you as approachable and the staff at school as supportive. Parents feel that you listen to any issues they have, and act swiftly to help to improve the situation. A pupil at your school typically feels loved, accepted, happy and part of a 'big family'. Parents and staff have confidence in your leadership. Staff morale is high, and staff are willing to throw themselves into life at school, as evidenced by the vast majority being dressed-up for World

Book Day during the inspection. I enjoyed watching Wally from 'Where's Wally?' and Jemima Puddle Duck leading classroom activities.

Both you and the governors have a passion for supporting parents and engaging them in school life. 'Stay and play' opportunities are appreciated by parents. Parent workshops, in which teachers explain teaching methods and give examples of how parents can support their children at home, with mathematics or phonics for example, are also effective. Another example is the 'reado card', which guides parents about how to help with reading at home. Instead of a bingo card with numbers, there are reading tasks, such as enjoying a poem together at home, or reading a story with exaggerated expression.

Teaching and learning at school are characterised by an excellent level of focus on the part of the pupils and positive relationships in classrooms. Specifically, when it is time for pupils to talk to each other about their learning they do so with gusto. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and seek to develop a sense of independence in learning. Any support is not given liberally, but only when needed. This helps pupils to develop resilience. In a science lesson, one boy was astounded when a magnet attracted a paperclip, and shouted 'Wow!' as learning was brought to life for him. This is mirrored throughout the curriculum, where you try to ensure that visits and trips link directly to the topics being studied. Pupils spoke warmly of the visit to the Royal Albert Hall, for example. Other visits, like those to the aquarium and York's Chocolate Story, clearly link to curriculum topics.

You are not complacent, and recognise that there is work still to do. You have been highly effective in improving the teaching of mathematics. You are aware that a lower proportion of pupils reached the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. You are developing the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Your tracking also tells you which classes or groups are making weaker progress, and you have plans in place to help these groups catch up.

The governing body has been robust in supporting school leaders when tackling any teaching that requires improvement. The current profile of teaching is stronger than that at the time of the last inspection. You also now have rigorous processes to check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. This indicates that the school has been effective in addressing the areas for improvement noted in the previous inspection report. Governors are reflective of their own strengths and have plans in place to become even more effective.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies and procedures linked to safeguarding are up to date, and staff training ensures that everyone understands these policies. Processes in place for the appointment of staff are also compliant. There is a tenacity around ensuring that more-vulnerable pupils are supported. This is also the case for any pupils who are regularly absent. You and other leaders use a variety of strategies to support

parents when coaxing pupils back into school, and robust investigation is undertaken if ever you are concerned about a pupil's well-being.

Pupils are kind to one another and courteous to their peers and adults. They understand the need to behave well in class and when moving around the building, and were able to explain the 'behaviour triangle' in some detail. They said that this system encourages them to behave well, and therefore to stay in the 'green zone'. They said that they did not want to lose any golden time by moving down into other zones on the triangle. Pupils are confident that if any unkind words were being used, or if anyone was being bullied, adults in school would help sort it out.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They told me about how to stay safe on the roads, and how and why to stay safe online. They understand this in some detail, to the point of explaining how to switch to 'Ghost Mode' on Snapchat and the impact of this. Staff and parents overwhelmingly state that your school is secure, and careful checks help keep pupils safe. Policies and procedures, together with specific curriculum activities, support a culture of safeguarding at school. Inspection evidence confirms this.

You place a high priority on ensuring that pupils stay fit and healthy too. The assistant headteacher used the sports premium, together with other grants, to organise 'Believe and Achieve' last year. This initiative encouraged pupils to participate in different sports. The vast majority of pupils were involved. It included opportunities to try ice skating, trampolining and gymnastics, in addition to cookery classes focused on healthy eating.

## **Inspection findings**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics is strong. When planning lessons, teachers focus on developing pupils' ability to solve problems and to explain their thinking when grappling with mathematical concepts. You, personally, have taken a lead on developing the quality of mathematics teaching at school. Teachers have accessed a wide range of training to develop their skills. As a result of this focus, the progress that pupils are making in this subject is increasing rapidly. When I looked at exercise books, I could see pupils being pushed to think through ideas and extend their knowledge. You have increased staffing at key stage 2 so that there are more opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to work with smaller groups of pupils to push them even further. The most able pupils are making greater progress now as a result. Children in Reception also work in smaller 'focus groups' to help them improve their understanding of number and shape, for example.
- You are aware that the proportion of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reaching higher standards in national tests was lower than average. Your own self-evaluation documents and school development plans recognise that more pupils need to be 'ready to fly' when they reach secondary school. As such, there has been a focus on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school so that all pupils are able to make the best progress possible, and reach the highest of standards. Teachers and teaching assistants attempt to make learning 'fluid', as you say.

Teachers note how well different pupils are doing in particular topics, and they then shape the groups that they are in for the next day, so that no pupils are treading water, or sitting confused. By doing so, learning time is maximised and pupils make quicker progress.

- One of my areas of focus was to find out how well you support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants are aware of the needs of pupils in their class, and are increasingly effective in meeting these needs. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has an overview of all of the pupils with additional needs and has developed a system to track the impact of any specific support that they are receiving. Pupils who have additional needs are identified, assessed and supported with an increasing level of precision. Much of this work is in its infancy, however. The governing body has ensured that additional staffing has been invested in this area of school life to set up systems and provide for these pupils. This year, the SENCo has had more time to develop support for this group of pupils.
- Governors recognise that turbulence in staffing affected the progress of pupils in Year 3. You, together with the assistant headteachers, have worked hard to ensure that the education on offer to this year group is of the highest quality. As a result of improved provision when these pupils were in Year 2, a greater proportion reached national standards than had done so at the time of the phonics check in Year 1 or when in early years. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of teaching for this year group is strong, and the progress that pupils are making continues to increase. This is also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who are higher achievers.
- Although not included in lines of questioning for this inspection, I note the strength of provision and leadership in early years and the increasing number of children leaving Reception ready for Year 1. I can confirm that the proportion of pupils doing well in phonics continues to improve, and I consider the quality of provision in upper key stage 2 to be a strength.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continues to strengthen, and the progress that they make continues to gain pace
- consistently good teaching across all year groups enables pupils to make equally strong progress so that any differences in standards are eradicated.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Sheffield, the regional schools' commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. 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 considered the actions that leaders are taking to improve the rates of progress pupils are making and the standards they are reaching in mathematics. I also explored the extent to which pupils are being pushed to reach the highest of standards in reading, writing and mathematics. I looked at the quality of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the extent to which school leaders are ensuring that these pupils are well catered for. In addition, I investigated the progress of pupils in Year 3 to check that these pupils are reaching the standards of which they are capable. I looked at how safe pupils are at school, and how adults at school teach pupils to keep themselves safe.

During the inspection I met with you, the assistant headteachers and some of the middle leaders at school, including the SENCo. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair. I spoke to a group of parents at the beginning of the school day. I observed teaching and learning with you, and I reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and a variety of subjects. I spoke to two groups of pupils, one from Year 6 and one from Year 3, in addition to observing behaviour at lunchtime and pupils moving around the building. I listened to some Year 3 pupils read. I discussed the strengths of the school with a representative from the local authority and you presented information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school development plan, and the school's self-evaluation document. I reviewed a variety of other documents, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website. I also considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), and the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.