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Mrs Gaynor Leadbeater
Headteacher
Highburton Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School
Northfield Lane
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Dear Mrs Leadbeater

Short inspection of Highburton Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 February 2014.

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 effected improvements in many aspects. You are ambitious for the school and are leading the school with energy and vision. Together with a hard-working leadership team, you have the full support and confidence of staff, governors and pupils. You know your school well and you are determined to provide the best education possible for every pupil.

The school's Christian values of 'friendship, forgiveness, aspiration and respect' are woven through all aspects of the school's work. You have promoted a calm, warm and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils are happy, ready to learn and achieve well. Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their learning and are immensely proud to belong to the school. One pupil told me, 'Our school is the best place in the world.' Parents and carers are fully supportive of the school and value the work of you and your team. As one parent commented to me, 'This is a fabulous school.' Almost every parent who shared their view using the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to others.

Governors are committed to the continued success of the school. They bring a range of expertise to their roles and regularly visit the school and offer a healthy balance of challenge and support to you and your team. Teachers share your high aspirations for pupils' achievement. They are enthused about teaching and want the best for all pupils. Teachers work constructively with each other and with colleagues in other schools locally to develop their practice. All members of staff who

completed Parent View said that they are proud to work in the school.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that all pupils have a clear understanding about what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils enthusiastically told me about their 'targets' and explained how teachers give them clear guidance about how to improve their work in every lesson. You were also asked to ensure that work set sufficiently challenges the most able pupils. Through looking at pupils' books, it is clear that the most able pupils are now challenged effectively. Your assessment information shows that these pupils are now making stronger progress and a greater proportion is reaching the higher standards at the end of early years, key stage 1 and by the end of Year 5.

Inspectors also asked you to ensure that all leaders keep a close check on their areas of responsibility and take actions to further accelerate pupils' progress. You have strengthened your leadership team through the appointment of a highly skilled assistant headteacher and an early years leader. This has enabled you to have a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have increased the rigour of your checks to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently strong and that all pupils are making at least good progress in all areas of school. You ensure that the progress of all pupils is closely tracked, and you quickly identify groups and individuals who are falling behind, working with teachers to plan how to address gaps in pupils' learning.

Children get off to a very strong start in the early years as a result of well-planned activities and teachers' high expectations. They achieve well and settle quickly into school life. Over time, pupils make good, and sometimes better, progress and, by the end of Year 5, they achieve standards which are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. You have rightly identified that the progress made by some middle-attaining pupils across key stage 1 could be stronger in reading and mathematics and you have started to take action to address this.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks on the suitability of all those who work or volunteer in the school are carried out rigorously. Staff and governors have undertaken timely training in keeping pupils safe.

The caring relationships that have been established between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel safe. A group of Year 5 pupils have been trained as 'Befrienders' and are available in the playground to talk with any pupils who have a problem. Pupils have confidence that these pupils and all adults in school will help them if they have a problem and they know that it will be dealt with quickly.

Pupils told me that bullying very rarely happens in school. They are confident that an adult would deal with it for them, swiftly and successfully, if incidents did occur.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, I explored whether all middle-attaining pupils are making good enough progress in reading, especially across key stage 1.
- Throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic about reading and they read accurately and fluently. Teachers provide opportunities in lessons for them to develop their vocabulary well. In a Year 2 class we visited, we observed pupils confidently defining words such as 'desperation' and 'impatient'.
- Pupils appreciate the variety of fiction and non-fiction books on offer in the school's well-stocked library. The introduction of a new approach to promote reading has been very successful and pupils told me how much they enjoy reading and discussing high-quality texts. Pupils also enthusiastically told me about their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl and David Walliams. We agreed that you will continue to closely monitor the impact of 'guided reading' sessions as, on occasions, pupils are not always given work that challenges them enough or expects them to use a range of more complex reading skills.
- Another key line of enquiry, and a key priority in your school improvement plan, was the progress of middle-attaining pupils in mathematics. Pupils are progressing well in mathematics as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and probing questioning. Teachers ensure that appropriate practical apparatus help pupils understand ideas behind mathematics effectively. Pupils are given regular opportunities to talk about their learning in mathematics. For example, in a Year 3 class we visited, we observed pupils confidently discussing how to effectively calculate the total of the internal angles within scalene triangles.
- Work in books shows that pupils' confidence and skills in number, operations and calculation are secure. The most able pupils are quickly given work that challenges them and allows them to practise their skills through solving problems and reasoning. However, pupils' work shows that teachers do not always ensure that middle-attaining pupils are given similar opportunities soon enough. Recent whole-school training led by the assistant headteacher has resulted in teachers beginning to change their approach to the teaching of mathematics. However, this new approach is not yet evident in all classrooms.
- My last key line of enquiry was to explore how effectively teaching across key stage 2 leads to good progress and high attainment for all pupils, especially for the current Year 4 pupils. This is because the attainment of these pupils at the end of key stage 1 was only average.
- Across key stage 2, pupils make good progress with some making better progress. By the end of Year 5, your assessment records show that the vast majority of pupils reach the expected standard for their age, and many work above this. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 4 remains lower than that of other year groups. However, these pupils are now making stronger progress as a result of better teaching over recent years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent work to improve teaching and learning in mathematics continues and makes sure that middle-attaining pupils make strong progress and apply their skills through problem solving and reasoning
- teachers plan more regular opportunities for pupils to develop higher-order reading comprehension 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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Randall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher, five parents, three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. I talked with small groups of pupils informally in lessons and during playtime. With you, I visited all classes. I looked at current English and mathematics books from pupils in all year groups with you and your assistant headteacher. I also listened to some pupils read in classes.

I examined a range of documentation, including documents relating to attendance and safeguarding. I took account of the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of how well it is doing and the school's improvement plan. I reviewed the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the 31 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 63 pupil responses and 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.