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Mr Geoff Morrison  
Headteacher  
Holycroft Primary School  
Victoria Road  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Morrison

### **Short inspection of Holycroft Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 June 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2017, you have led the school with resolve and a real sense of moral purpose. You are determined that all pupils get the very best. You have developed leadership at all levels in the school.

You know your community well and respond to its needs. Your openness and availability was commented on very positively by many of the parents and carers with whom I spoke during the inspection. The strong relationships which you and your staff have with parents have had a very positive impact on improving attendance at the school, which is now close to the national average. You have instilled in parents an understanding of the importance of their child's regular attendance. They know that if they are in school, they are learning and they are safe. As a result, attendance is improving.

Improving the quality of the teaching of reading has been a priority for you and your team. You have been increasingly successful in this because your approach has been school-wide and systematic. The effect of the school's actions to improve reading have been carefully monitored. A significant proportion of children arrive at the school with lower than expected skills in language. As a result of the expertise of your early years leader, her team and the language-rich and stimulating environment, children soon settle and make rapid progress. Phonics is well taught and supported by carefully chosen and appropriate reading books. Children have many opportunities to work together, talk about books and words, and ask and

answer questions. Staff are very skilled at ensuring that they note children's progress and use the information to shape next steps for each child. Because of this, children's acquisition of language and reading skills is rapid. Parents are very fully and actively involved in their children's learning to read. You run successful sessions for parents about reading using your on-site learning hub. Parents told me that they welcome these and similar opportunities you offer to them to get fully involved with their children's learning.

Further up the school, as pupils' reading skills deepen, I saw evidence of pupils reading a wide range of books, poetry and other texts. This growing experience of a range of different types of books and texts helps pupils develop a wide range of comprehension and other skills, such as inference, in their reading. This, in turn, is having a positive effect on their own writing. You are aware that there is still more to do to develop and sharpen the links between pupils' reading and their writing. Pupils enjoy reading and they told me that they particularly enjoy the daily class story time. I saw examples of staff expertly balancing the need to keep the story's narrative momentum going while also pausing to help pupils reflect on vocabulary, effect and word knowledge. Pupils were obviously thoroughly enjoying and benefiting from these shared reading sessions.

Your previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve the teaching of mathematics across the school. You have addressed this weakness very successfully. The teaching of mathematics at the school is good and pupils do well. Many pupils told me that they enjoy mathematics and the opportunities that they have to untie knotty problems and play with number, taking delight in patterns and shapes. I saw examples of pupils working together to tease out just exactly what was being asked for in a written mathematics question. I also saw staff moving promptly and carefully to address misconceptions in pupils' mathematical understanding and get them back on track. Staff were able to do this because of their skill, good mathematical understanding and their diligent monitoring of pupils' progress during lessons.

Staff morale is high. You use the performance management of staff to develop their skills, confidence and understanding of pupils' needs and how to address them. You have an effective approach to the assessment of teachers' skills. This ensures that staff see the vital contribution they make to whole-school planning and pupils' success, through the development of their skills and confidence. Staff feel part of the continued improvement of the school. You monitor pupils' progress, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, regularly and very carefully. Because of this, you and your team promptly pick up any slowing in the pace of learning and address it successfully.

Governors know the school very well and are well supplied with information by you about how the school is doing. However, they do not rely on this alone. There are close links between named governors and particular areas, subjects and projects at the school. Through these links, governors gain vivid insights into the work of the school and the effect on pupils' learning, pleasure and well-being. Your staff, in turn, gain valuable experience and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of governors and their vital role in the school. Governors regularly undertake learning

walks and talk with pupils to gain additional insights and further evidence to support their views of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously kept and are of high quality.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You have very strong links with outside agencies. The records of your dealings with these agencies are detailed and show your meticulous approach to this vital work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

### **Inspection findings**

- Reading is a growing strength at the school. You have been successful in ensuring that pupils develop their skills as readers of both fiction and non-fiction texts. You have also encouraged a love of reading. School displays celebrate and encourage reading. During the inspection, pupils spoke to me with enthusiasm about what they were reading. I saw staff using deft questioning to elicit detailed responses from pupils about the ways writers use word choice to create mood and tone in the reader. They were then able to use similar techniques in their own writing.
- Leadership of SEN is effective. Colleagues work with staff and governors to monitor the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Additional funding is spent wisely. Staff expectations for these pupils are high. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Communications with parents are good.
- The early years is very well led. Children enter this area of the school with skills and experience that are less developed than those normally expected for their age. Because of the actions of the leader and her team, children quickly thrive in an exciting environment that is rich in language and interesting experiences. They learn how to get on together and are safe and well behaved. They enjoy learning and being together. The phonics programme is well taught and carefully linked to reading books. Parents are encouraged to play a very active role in their children's learning. They welcome and appreciate this.
- You monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on learning very carefully. You gather information about pupils' progress regularly. You check the accuracy of your staff's judgements through regular visits by senior and subject leaders to classrooms, through joint project work and through checks of pupils' work. You check your own judgements and that of your senior team through working with the local authority and the school's improvement partner employed by the governors. You use the information you gather about teaching and pupils' progress to fine-tune training and improve pupils' experience of school.

- Staff demonstrate good subject knowledge. They know their pupils well and they use the information they gather about pupils' progress to plan work that stimulates and engages them. Classrooms are attractive, friendly places where pupils feel confident and relaxed. Relationships between adults and pupils and pupils and pupils are marked by kindness and respect. As a result, there is no interruption to learning and so pupils make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants use a range of effective strategies in their questioning of pupils to stimulate and deepen their understanding and confidence.
- Pupils like coming to school. They are very appreciative and aware of the effort and care that you and your staff put into keeping them safe. Pupils told me that they feel safe and know how to stay safe. They told me that there are regular activities and events at the school that help them understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. They said that bullying is very rare. They also said that they were aware of the range of forms that bullying can take and what to do if it happened to them or to a friend. They said that they were very confident that adults at the school would deal with it promptly and well.
- Pupils are respectful, kind and aware of the needs of others. They treat their environment very well. Classroom routines are resolute and encourage pupils to play a very active role in their own learning. There is no litter at the school. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning at secondary school by the carefully structured transition arrangements you have ensured are in place.
- Parents told me that they are very satisfied with the service the school offers their children. They commented on how easy it was to get in touch with you and your staff to discuss their children's progress and well-being.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to strengthen the whole-school approaches to reading by developing further pupils' understanding of the links between reading and their own writing and its intended audience.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes to observe learning and, where appropriate, talk with pupils about their work and experience of school. I was accompanied by you or your deputy in all of these visits. I scrutinised a wide range of pupils' books and folders of work. I spoke with you, members of the senior team, governors, the special educational needs coordinator and two colleagues from Bradford children's services. I spoke on the telephone with an officer of the local authority school's service and with a contractor who is engaged by the governors to support the school. I observed and spoke informally with pupils at the start and end of the day and during breaktime and lunchtime. I spoke with parents at the start and end of the day. I met with eight Year 5 pupils formally to discuss their views of the school. I also listened to four Year 3 pupils read and discussed their reading with them. I took into account the nine text messages from parents and the views of the 15 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also took into account 26 responses from staff and 51 responses from pupils to their online surveys. I read a range of documents about the school's progress, safeguarding systems, monitoring, staff training and governors' work.