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Mrs Christine Boxall/Mr Chris Norris
Interim Headteachers
Burnsall Voluntary Aided Primary School
Burnsall
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Dear Mrs Boxall/Mr Norris

Short inspection of Burnsall Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

The recently retired headteacher, governors and staff have worked hard to create a unique environment for learning where meeting the individual needs of every pupil is a priority. On the day of the inspection, you had both been in role for just a few days. Even so, you demonstrated a detailed understanding of the school. You both described frequent meetings with the previous headteacher. The accurate self-evaluation summary, school improvement plan and other detailed documentation will aid you greatly in this period of leadership transition.

The school is one of four small primary schools in the Upper Wharfedale Primary Federation. The federation governors share a strong sense of purpose and are proactive and forward-thinking. Staff from all four schools work closely together and support one another with curriculum development and assessments. Joint learning events enable the pupils to access new opportunities and make new friends.

At the beginning of the day, a number of parents were keen to talk to me. One described the school as 'one big happy family', where community and family values pervade all aspects of the curriculum. Another described it as 'an amazing school where everyone has a voice and every pupil grows in confidence'. Nearly all the parents completed Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and many left written comments praising the wonderful environment and learning opportunities afforded to their children.

Pupils are equally supportive and proud of their village school and were eager to tell me how much they enjoy school. High attendance figures and evidence from Ofsted's online survey of pupils' views support this.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching to further raise standards and to accelerate pupils' progress. The recent appointment of a key stage 2 teacher/federation mathematics leader is having a significant impact. Pupils are now set clear 'steps to success' and they know exactly what they need to do to reach the next level in their learning. In key stage 2, pupils are offered more opportunities to write imaginatively and at length in English and other subjects. However, in key stage 1, the quality of teaching of writing needs to be developed further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The recently retired headteacher and governors have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective and fit for purpose. The recently updated central record of pre-employment checks is comprehensive and meticulously kept. All staff take safeguarding seriously and are fully committed to keeping pupils safe and free from harm. Staff have developed strong and nurturing relationships with pupils in their class and can quickly spot if any child is upset. Safeguarding training is a priority and, in recent months, all staff and governors have been involved in child protection, 'Prevent' and e-safety training.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they say that bullying does not happen, but, if it did, they would tell a teacher immediately. Pupils are supportive of each other and they all play well together regardless of age or gender. One pupil summed this up: 'There is no meanness and everyone cares for each other.' Pupils were very knowledgeable about how to stay safe online and they were keen to show me the e-safety posters they had made.

Parents and carers spoken to all agreed that the school was a safe and caring environment. These views are reinforced in the responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the first line of enquiry would be to evaluate the quality of the teaching of phonics and its impact on attainment. In the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening assessment, only 40% of pupils achieved the expected standard. It is clear that much work has been done, including training for staff, additional support for pupils who speak English as an additional language, and close tracking of each child's progress. We observed a phonics teaching session where pupils from Years 1 and 2 were reading 'real' and 'nonsense' words. All were able to decode the letter patterns and read the words. Later in the morning, the Year 2 pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check

in 2017 read to me. All of them have developed good reading skills and are now able to read fluently.

- My next line of enquiry looked at what is being done to improve outcomes for the most able pupils. This was because, in 2016 and 2017, no pupil achieved the greater depth standard in writing, mathematics or grammar, punctuation and spelling at either key stage 1 or key stage 2. You agreed that this was a concern. The teacher in key stage 2 was able to explain what strategies she was using to raise attainment. Effective feedback and clear development steps for each child are having some effect, but more needs to be done. Analysis of pupils' work shows that standards are rising, but the pace needs to be accelerated.
- My third line of enquiry involved looking at the wider curriculum and how pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum is met. This was a particular concern as all of key stage 1 is in one class and key stage 2 in another. Teachers from the four schools in the federation have worked hard to develop a four-year plan. Subject leaders also share resources and good practice. Despite the isolated location of your school, pupils enjoy frequent visits out of school and this greatly enhances the curriculum. Pupils from key stage 2 were keen to tell me about a recent history topic. This topic, about early man, involved a 'Stone Age Day' at Skipton Woods, where they made tools, lit fires using flints and steel and cooked marshmallows! Back at school, they made Stone Age medicines in science, decorative necklaces in art and wrote about the trials of life in the Stone Age. Work in science is a strength of the school and this is reflected not only in the end of key stage results, but also in pupils' work in their exercise books. Frequent scientific enquiries involving practical tasks form the basis of the school's science curriculum and links with mathematics are used effectively.
- My final line of enquiry focused on what leaders are doing to improve standards in writing across the school. Collectively in 2016 and 2017, 60% of pupils met the expected standard in the national tests at the end of key stage 2, while the progress score for pupils' writing in 2016 was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. In key stage 1, no pupils reached the higher standard in 2016 or 2017. The school's self-evaluation summary correctly identifies improving writing as a priority. The recently appointed federation subject leader for English has already provided training opportunities for staff. Teachers from all four schools are involved in frequent moderation of writing exercises. Pupils are being provided with increased opportunities for extended writing across a range of subjects and for a range of purposes. Analysis of writing indicates that progress is now stronger across key stage 2 than in the past, with pupils increasingly using a wider range of vocabulary and punctuation.
- Outdoor provision for early years children affords some good opportunities for physical and social development. However, teachers and teaching assistants in the early years do not currently ensure that there are enough opportunities for children to develop their reading, writing and number skills outside of the classroom.
- Reading is an area of strength. A culture for reading has been established and pupils talk knowledgeably about their favourite books and authors. Those I listened to read were able to do so with fluency and some read with great

expression. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and do so on a daily basis. Reading progress is recorded in individual reading journals. The strength in reading is reflected in the positive attainment and progress at the end of both key stages.

- The chair of governors and the governing body have a comprehensive knowledge of the school and a good mix of skills. They make regular visits and are knowledgeable about safeguarding, finance and attainment data. Governors are passionate about the school and were able to describe accurately to me the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in the management of the school and provide strong support and challenge in equal measure. Governors are working hard to ensure that the school is sustainable and continues to provide an effective education for pupils in the local community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing is improved so that pupils make more rapid progress
- there is increased challenge for the most able pupils and this is reflected in a greater percentage reaching the higher standard at the end of each key stage
- the early years outdoor area provides children with more opportunities to develop reading, writing and number skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the federation 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

Richard Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I looked specifically at safeguarding, attainment and progress in writing, challenge for the most able pupils and how you provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your school office manager, the federation subject leader for English, the chair of the governing body and the foundation governor. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data, and the recent review by the local authority. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with three groups of pupils from a range of year

groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. The third group described the wider curriculum and showed me examples of work from a range of subject areas. You and I visited all classes and observed phonics in key stage 1 and writing in key stage 2. We also revisited the early years and key stage 1 class and observed mathematics. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of the written work, mathematics and topic work of every pupil. I also reviewed the responses from Ofsted's online survey of pupil and staff views.