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Ms Lucille Pollard
Headteacher
Yorke Mead Primary School
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Dear Ms Pollard

Short inspection of Yorke Mead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 July 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 and your able governing body have successfully managed the expansion of the school, leading to the creation of a much-larger two-form entry school. With the project now nearing completion, it is evident that the complexities of developing the site, as well as recruiting and training new staff, have been achieved with care and considerable attention to detail. Despite the increased size of the school, you have succeeded in maintaining the warm, family-friendly ethos which continues to appeal to parents and carers.

The parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were extremely happy with the school. Typical comments included, 'The staff are really supportive so any issues can be dealt with quickly' and 'My child loves coming to school because teachers make the lessons fun. He really loves doing the daily mile.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the 116 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the majority of parents who texted about their views of the school.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school. They are polite to each other and respectful to adults. Leaders actively promote pupils' use of 'mindfulness' skills, encouraging pupils' deeper thinking and developing their emotional well-being. Pupils are taught to develop resilience and perseverance and they confidently

explain how 'the power of yet' encourages them to keep on trying because success may require time and effort to achieve. Pastoral support, health and welfare are strengths of the school.

Since the last inspection, you have worked hard to secure further improvements to the school. You have successfully addressed areas which had been identified as priorities for development. For example, you have ensured that the curriculum offers more frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects, and you have also refined the school's marking and feedback policy, enabling pupils to have a clearer understanding of how to improve their own work.

Subject leaders, especially those responsible for subjects other than English and mathematics, have benefited from the clear direction given to them by senior leaders. As a result, their confidence has grown and their work is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes across the curriculum. Nevertheless, there is more work to be done to develop a robust system for checking how much progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Governors ensure that they understand the needs, strengths and development priorities of the school well. They ask appropriately challenging questions of senior leaders. They also fully support your drive to improve pupils' progress and outcomes in English and mathematics in order that the school can confidently evaluate itself as outstanding in the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders, especially those with directly designated responsibilities for keeping pupils safe, ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are well organised, securely maintained and fit for purpose. Records of adults' suitability to work with children are clear and comprehensive. Teachers and support staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school, and they are confident about how to report any concerns. The designated safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with other agencies, ensuring that concerns are followed up quickly. Leaders are well versed in how to seek advice from specialist support staff should the need arise. The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that pupils are safe and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain whether the school remained good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these was about the steps leaders are taking to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2. In the 2016 and the 2017 key stage 2 tests, pupils' performance indicated that they had made broadly similar progress in these subjects to pupils nationally. You were aware that, in 2017, pupils' progress dropped a little compared with the previous year.

- You are rightly keen to improve the situation and you have investigated the reasons why progress was not higher. Consequently, you introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading and mathematics in particular. I asked you to continue this work in order to improve progress by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- In English, you invested wisely in new texts for key stage 2 classes, so pupils now study 'Macbeth' and 'Skellig', for example. This offers pupils a higher level of challenge and gives teachers more opportunities to deepen pupils' thinking and promote inference and deduction skills.
- At the same time, you have also introduced targeted support for less-able pupils to ensure that they make as much progress as possible. When we visited lessons together during the inspection, we saw that work was well matched to pupils' learning needs. Teachers were providing opportunities for pupils to discuss concepts such as imagery, metaphor and personification in literature. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils had written letters from Lady Macbeth to her husband, persuading him to show more ambition.
- Teachers frequently link written tasks to planned opportunities for pupils to edit and improve their own writing. This is helping to improve writing outcomes.
- In mathematics, you have also raised teachers' expectations about what pupils are expected to achieve. Working in partnership with 'Herts for Learning', you have introduced a new approach to planning mathematics lessons. Teachers ensure that lessons allow pupils to use practical equipment which helps them visualise and solve more challenging questions. This is improving pupils' confidence in tackling problems that require the use of mathematical reasoning.
- Pupils also benefit from choosing their own level of challenge in some parts of their mathematics lessons. Recently, you added the extra 'turbo' challenge because you identified the need to challenge the most able pupils even more.
- My next line of enquiry was about the quality of the school's wider curriculum, and the progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school has particular strengths, notably in art, French and music, where the contribution made by teachers with specialist skills is having a positive impact on outcomes. French lessons in the 'Bistro' are engaging and well structured. The quality of work in pupils' art sketchbooks is consistently high. All pupils in Years 3 and 5 are able to learn to play a stringed instrument and an African drum, which they thoroughly enjoy. The school's outdoor curriculum provides additional, rich opportunities for pupils to learn about their local environment.
- The school has devised a system to assess whether pupils are attaining below, in line with or above national expectations in subjects other than English and mathematics. However, there is not yet an agreed approach for tracking pupils' progress. You told me that this is the next step in your work to secure the best possible progress for pupils across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are fully embedded in order to improve pupils' progress
- a system to track pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection. I met the leaders who have responsibility for English, mathematics, art, design and technology, mental arithmetic, physical education, religious studies, history, personal, social and health education and science. In addition, I met with five governors, including both of the co-chairs, and spoke on the telephone to the 'Herts for Learning' improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's self-evaluation, plans and records for the use of additional funding and the school's assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. I undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I took account of the Ofsted online questionnaire responses from 116 parents, as well as 83 written responses from parents. I analysed 29 responses from staff giving their views of the school.