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Mrs Elaine Bradley
Headteacher
Slaithwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Bradley

Short inspection of Slaithwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant 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 December 2013.

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 a very strong vision for pupils' learning and development and this is well supported by the governing body. Over your time in post, you have made continual improvements to the school so that pupils' educational experience keeps getting better. Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with an exciting curriculum which develops their well-being, as well as their academic capabilities.

Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and the experiences school provides. The grounds are used to maximum effect, with a cabin, allotment, pond and extensive play areas with climbing equipment and a woodland area. Staff use these facilities to promote pupils' teamwork, resilience and risk-taking. They also support pupils' development of knowledge, skills and understanding across the wider curriculum, for example in science.

Pupils feel well cared for because staff have a considerate and nurturing approach. Parents and carers also highly value the school's community feel. Relationships are built on trust and mutual respect and pupils respond by having excellent attitudes to their learning. Additional extra-curricular activities such as the little chefs' club, the gardening club and crazy golf enhance the learning that takes place in school time and encourage pupils to find new interests. Leaders value pupils' ideas and opinions and, as a result, pupils become articulate and confident. Pupils relish responsibilities

such as being buddies, leaders, school councillors and part of the green team. Older pupils are really keen to provide support for younger ones and do so with pride and enthusiasm. Pupils helping to lead the lunchtime running club contribute to the exemplary lunchtime experience. Supervised sports and activities ensure that pupils are well occupied and physically active. Consequently, pupils behave very well at lunchtime.

You are continually working to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which was identified as an area for development at the last inspection. Matching work to pupils' needs is now a strength. New systems for assessment and improved accountability through appraisal are resulting in staff having a very secure understanding of each pupil's stage of development and their next steps for learning. You have introduced a coaching model to support teachers in developing their practice and the impact it has on pupils' learning. Consequently, staff feel valued and supported. Together as a staff team, you take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes. Pupils make good progress and consistently reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. As a result of your sharp self-evaluation, you quickly notice any relative weaknesses in pupils' outcomes and take prompt action. For example, following slightly disappointing outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1 in 2016, there was strong improvement in 2017, which is set to continue as a result of leaders' actions. You are not complacent about the positive outcomes which pupils achieve and are always looking for ways to fine-tune approaches to teaching. During the inspection, you recognised the need for pupils to secure their letter formation more quickly to assist their writing development. Additionally, in mathematics, following a successful focus on pupils' problem-solving, you are aware that the next step is to develop pupils' reasoning skills to support their mathematical understanding.

The school benefits from highly skilled governors who provide appropriate challenge and support to enable the school to keep improving. They use their areas of responsibility, regular visits and involvement in school life to check for themselves the impact of leaders' actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are passionate about the importance of safeguarding. A vigilant safeguarding culture is well established. You have made sure that procedures are effective and records are detailed and of high quality. Training successfully supports staff in identifying and reporting any causes for concern. Leaders also communicate important safeguarding updates to parents.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. The lunchtime experience promotes good behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They are confident that, should it happen, staff would deal with it competently. Pupils are taught about keeping themselves and others safe through the carefully planned curriculum. For example, using the woodland area and following a code of conduct help them to assess and manage risks.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been consistently in line with the national average over time. However, the proportion of children meeting the early learning goal for writing has declined. The early years leader has taken prompt action to address this. Leaders have recognised that children often begin school with fine motor skill development which is below the expected stage for their age. This is limiting their writing development. Having undertaken research, the early years leader has introduced a range of strategies to further develop children's control and coordination of large and small movements. Additionally, leaders have worked with parents and pre-school settings to make clear the expectations for when children begin Reception. Consequently, parents feel more able to support their child's learning at home. In the classroom, leaders have made sure that a wide range of resources are at hand for children to use when writing. This supports them in accurately applying their phonics knowledge. Children's books show how they are developing greater control in holding a pencil. However, leaders acknowledge that children are not securing accurate letter formation quickly enough. Therefore, writing development is hindered for some children and continues to be a barrier as pupils progress through key stage 1. Leaders also agree that their checks on children's progress could be developed further. This would give them greater clarity in understanding the progress made by different groups, such as boys, who were an underperforming group in 2017.
- The current Year 1 pupils who had not developed their fine motor skills sufficiently in Reception are now receiving very effective intervention to support this development. Pupils carry out challenging real-life tasks such as pegging socks and fastening and unfastening belts, buckles and zips. However, in key stage 1 lessons, there are missed opportunities for staff to remind pupils about using the correct pen grip and accurate letter and number formation to enable these skills to become quickly established.
- Attainment in key stage 1 improved in 2017. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard was also above the national average for reading and mathematics. The improvements seen in 2017 are set to continue. The school's assessment information, along with work in lessons and books, confirms that pupils are making good progress in their learning across the curriculum. This is because leaders have made effective ongoing checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teachers are very reflective and continually evaluate the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use this to challenge pupils with high-quality questioning. When scrutinising the work in pupils' mathematics books, leaders recognised that pupils in key stages 1 and 2 would benefit from increased opportunities to carry out tasks involving reasoning. This would deepen their understanding of the mathematical concepts they are learning.
- Reading continues to be a strength throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged and inspired to read by adults' enthusiasm for reading and the high-quality books

they have access to. They read regularly and relish the opportunity to talk about their favourite authors. They also enjoy the books they have read in class and recognise how these books support their learning across the wider curriculum. You make sure that pupils get off to a good start with reading through the effective teaching of phonics. The proportion of pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national average and is improving over time. Pupils' reading progress by the end of key stage 2 has been in the top 20% nationally for the last two years and was in the top 10% in 2017. Attainment and progress for current pupils continue to be very strong because you are committed to developing every pupil as a reader. Pupils who are not on track catch up quickly as a result of carefully targeted support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers frequently remind pupils to use an appropriate pen grip and accurate number and letter formation so that these skills are secured as soon as possible
- leaders analyse early years assessment information in more depth so that they are able to check the impact of their actions and whether further action is needed
- throughout key stages 1 and 2, pupils are given more opportunities for reasoning in their mathematics learning to help deepen their understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years and key stage 1 leader and the school business manager. I also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and I spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. Together with senior leaders and the leader for mathematics, we scrutinised the work of a sample of pupils. I listened to four pupils read. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils to ask

them about their experience of school and I talked to a sample of staff during lunchtime. I also took into consideration the 14 responses to the staff survey and the 56 responses to the pupil survey.