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Miss Helen Ring
Headteacher
Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School
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Richmond
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Dear Miss Ring

Short inspection of Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 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.

Since you were appointed in January 2016, your main aim has been to provide pupils with a broad educational experience within a small rural school context. The collaboration with Richmond Methodist Primary School, where leadership is shared between both schools, has enabled you to provide a broad and balanced curriculum experience, with a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the number of enrichment activities that they are involved in, such as competitive sports, outdoor learning and opportunities to perform in musical events.

The collaboration with Richmond Methodist School supports the professional development of your staff. Teachers talk positively about the opportunities to teach every week in a larger school context. This enables them to share ideas with other teachers and develop their teaching practice. Staff are proud to work in the school. They support your vision to improve the school further.

The pupils who I spoke to during the inspection are happy and enjoy school. This is reflected in their good attendance. The majority of pupils present their work well due to your high expectations for handwriting and presentation. Pupils are respectful and polite to visitors. They are confident to express their views and ideas. Pupils told me that they are proud of their school. Pupils who responded to the Ofsted online survey said that they would recommend the school to a friend.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of British values. They talked to me about the different faiths and cultures that they learn about in school. All pupils who responded to the Ofsted online survey said that they are taught to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat people equally. However, you told me that there is further work to do to develop pupils' awareness of the risks of extremism in society so that they are even better prepared for life in modern Britain.

Parents are supportive of the school. Parents talk positively about the 'family atmosphere', where every child is known. One parent said that the school 'genuinely cares about pupil welfare'. Another said that the school is 'an asset to the rural community, providing a stimulating and challenging environment'. However, some parents did express concern about staff turnover in recent years.

The governing body knows the school well and members regularly visit the school. The chair of the governing body has a long association with the school and knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are committed to providing wider opportunities for pupils within a small rural school context.

An area for improvement at the last inspection was to ensure that teachers give pupils time to explain their answers to questions and to extend their ideas. You have made this a focus of your monitoring of teaching and learning. Teachers give pupils time to think about questions before responding and they provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their work. Pupils support and help each other. Most pupils said that they feel challenged in some lessons, particularly in mathematics. However, you agree that there is more work to do to ensure that activities challenge pupils to think more deeply about their learning so that more pupils, particularly the most able, achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.

Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has remained above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' outcomes at key stage 2 have been more variable, particularly in writing. As a result, you have ensured a high priority is placed on the development of pupils' writing skills. Consequently, pupils in key stage 2 are now achieving outcomes in line with those expected for their age. However, you acknowledge that there is a need to ensure that more pupils, particularly the most able, achieve standards above those expected for their age.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Staff understand the importance of their role in keeping pupils safe. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. The parents I spoke to agree that their children are safe. Pupils and parents feel confident that any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Pupils told me that bullying is not an issue in school, because 'we are all

friends'. Pupils are encouraged to share any concerns or worries that they may have through activities such as 'circle time'.

Pupils know how to stay safe online. They told me that they receive regular updates on internet safety through activities such as the recent visit from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Pupils also know how to assess risks when participating in outdoor activities.

At the start of the inspection, there were some issues with the administration of the central record which records recruitment checks made on staff. You and governors are aware of the need to ensure that all the recruitment checks that you make are recorded accurately on the record. These issues were addressed by the end of the inspection.

Inspection findings

- A focus of my visit was to evaluate how effectively leaders are improving outcomes in writing. In 2016, the last time the school had a Year 6 intake, the progress pupils made in writing was well below that of similar pupils nationally. Since your appointment in January 2016, writing has been a main focus of your action plans. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write at greater length across the curriculum, including in subjects such as religious education and science. Pupils know their targets for improvement in writing. Feedback from teachers helps pupils to know their next steps in order to achieve their targets. Pupils write for different audiences and purpose. Writing projects such as 'My Tour de Yorkshire diary' enable pupils to practise and enhance their writing skills. As a result, standards of writing have improved, particularly in key stage 2. All pupils in key stage 2 are on track to achieve the expected standard in writing. However, you acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure that more pupils, particularly the most able, achieve at the higher standard.
- You have identified improving pupils' spelling as a main priority this year. Pupils are encouraged to use a dictionary to correct their spelling errors. However, your strategies to improve spelling are not consistently applied across the curriculum. You and I also saw examples of pupils not correcting their spellings accurately and misconceptions not being addressed successfully
- A further inspection focus was on how the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum experience for pupils within a very small school context. I found that pupils do indeed have access to a wide range of activities, such as music and competitive sports. Pupils told me that outdoor learning helps them to develop their wider skills. Your school aim to 'inspire pupils' curiosity' is certainly evident in practice. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about their design and technology projects and were proud to show me the bridges that they had designed and constructed. Pupils are highly involved in community events, such as the May Day celebrations. Many of your pupils play a musical instrument. More recently, pupils won the Wensleydale Tournament of Song. 'Enrichment Friday', where pupils are taught for the day at Richmond Methodist School, enables pupils to experience learning in a larger school context. This helps prepare pupils for moving onto secondary school. Work in pupils' books shows that they have a

number of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Parents told me that the wide range of activities on offer help children to build their confidence.

- Some aspects of the school's website did not meet the Department for Education requirements for what schools must publish online. However, this information was available in school and was updated on the school website during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers more consistently challenge pupils, particularly the most able, so that more pupils achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics
- the school's strategies to improve pupils' spelling are more effectively applied across the curriculum
- teachers promptly address pupils' misconceptions, as evident in their writing.

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 North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made brief visits to all classes with your deputy headteacher. I also looked at the work in pupils' books with you and your deputy headteacher. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

I took account of the four free-text responses from parents to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. I also took into account the five responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and the three responses to the Ofsted staff survey. I met with staff. I talked informally to pupils during lessons. I also met formally with all pupils, with the exception of pupils in Year 4 who were on a residential trip at the time of the inspection. I listened to three pupils read. I met with a number of parents to establish their views of the school.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes and attendance and safeguarding information.