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Mrs Rachel Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Asby Endowed School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the staff and governors, you have ensured that the school continues to be a welcoming school that serves the local community well. You have created strong relationships with the small number of families whose children attend the school.

Through your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, you have identified many aspects where the school excels and where the school needs to develop further. For example, you recognise that pupils' application of punctuation, grammar and spelling in their writing could be further improved to ensure that more pupils reach the highest standards. Although pupils have a developing knowledge of other faiths and cultures, they lack opportunities to develop first-hand experiences to deepen their understanding further.

Pupils continue to make good progress across a range of subjects. Pupil numbers remain much lower than other primary schools, therefore, published data does not give a true reflection of the progress that pupils make in school. Children get off to a good start in the early years. Progress in English and mathematics remains high across the school. Attendance remains high and rates of persistent absence are low.

Parents and carers speak very highly of the school. Parents said that the small size of the school and the family atmosphere are the defining factors in why they chose to send their children here. They really appreciate that you know every pupil well. They said that the pupils behave well and that they are safe in school. Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend this school.

Pupils said that they enjoy coming to this school. They said that they form strong friendships. They also said that bullying does not happen but sometimes they fall out with one another and they are quick to sort things out. From observing teaching, learning and assessment, talking to pupils and looking in their books I could see that they work hard in lessons and make good progress across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy their learning. When talking to older pupils about their learning, they were very keen to share the grisly facts about mummification with me in detail.

Pupils really enjoy the many sporting and arts-based opportunities that are offered by the school. For example, they spoke enthusiastically about their recent series of horse-riding lessons and the outdoor adventurous residential visit in the summer term. Pupils spoke about trips to the theatre and a trip to Manchester to participate in a mass choral event.

Governors are passionate for the school to continue to be good and serve the local community well. They are knowledgeable about the many strengths of the school and the areas that need to be further improved. Processes for the induction of new governors are effective. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. Each governor has an area of responsibility and regularly monitors the effectiveness of that area alongside the teachers. For example, governors were able to clearly articulate changes in the way mathematics is taught at the school and how that has led to increased pupil outcomes.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked you to improve the achievement of pupils further. You have put a range of measures in place since then to advance this aspect of the school's work. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in science, computing, music, physical education and modern foreign languages. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong; they ask challenging questions effectively.

The efforts to improve pupils' achievement have been most evident in mathematics. This has been in part due to the introduction of a new way in which you deliver mathematics. A renewed focus on consolidation of number skills has helped to create strong foundations to ensure that more pupils reach the highest standards. From looking in pupils' mathematics books and talking to them about their learning, I could see that the work was challenging them to think hard and apply their mathematics well.

Inspectors also asked you to develop the ways that you assess pupils' work. Since then, you have forged strong links with several partner schools. You regularly check the quality of pupils' work with colleagues from other schools. This work, alongside termly assessments, allows you to keep a careful check on the progress that each pupil makes. Teachers said that they benefit from this work as it gives them the opportunity to work with colleagues in larger schools and reassures them that their assessments are accurate. They said that it is beneficial to compare the work of their pupils to the work of pupils in the other schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

Together with the senior teacher, you have made safeguarding a priority. You work with several partner agencies including the police, several local and national charities and children's social care to ensure that children are safe. There is an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. All members of staff and governors have received appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' training to help them spot signs of potential radicalisation. You have received safer recruitment training.

Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe. They know about road safety, including safe cycling. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. They said that it was important to keep passwords private and not to give out personal information to strangers.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to how you develop pupils' subject-specific skills across the curriculum over time. You recently implemented a new plan for the delivery of the curriculum taking into account the low pupil numbers in the school. As part of this plan, you carefully considered how skills and knowledge are embedded to enable pupils to make good progress. From looking at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects, I found evidence that pupils make good progress. For example, pupils' mapping skills in geography are progressively developed each year. In history, pupils apply a range of skills that include first-hand experiences of primary sources such as visits to historical sites. In science, enquiry skills are built on systematically. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they use all their skills and knowledge well to plan tests with little teacher input.
- The next area that I looked at related to the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum. By checking on the standards of writing, you have identified that the quality of language used by pupils has been weak. You used this as a starting point to improve writing. First, you chose to immerse the pupils in a range of quality reading materials. You identified that to be better writers, the pupils must become better talkers. You invested in training the teachers to encourage the pupils to talk more about their writing prior to the writing process. Pupils save their best writing for the 'Wonderful Writing' books, where they take great pride in their work. You now structure writing sessions so that all the pupils write together with the oldest pupils modelling sustained writing to the younger pupils. Through their topic-based work, pupils write well across a range of genres and subjects. For example, current work focuses on preparation for Remembrance Sunday. Opportunities to write are never dull. For example, pupils particularly enjoyed writing an instructional text on how to turn their teacher into a toad. However, pupils do not consistently apply their knowledge about spelling, grammar and punctuation to reach the highest standards in writing.
- The final area that I looked at during the inspection focused on how the curriculum prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from a wide and exciting curriculum. The school has recently created effective links with a school in Ghana. You accommodated a visit from pupils from Ghana earlier this year. Many sporting and artistic opportunities enrich the curriculum, for example

theatre trips, trampolining, bouldering and football sessions. Pupils recently hosted a pop-up café as part of their Harvest celebrations. With the proceeds from the pop-up café, the pupils bought food items and donated these to the local food bank. Through their religious education work, pupils have developed a sound understanding of the many faiths and cultures represented in British society. However, over time, pupils have not had enough first-hand experiences to deepen their understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils apply their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills with greater levels of consistency to reach the highest standards
- they create more first-hand experiences for pupils to deepen their understanding of other faiths and cultures.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and both teachers. I held a meeting with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited both classes. We spoke to pupils in both classes and viewed samples of their work.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the single central record and records relating to the safeguarding of children. I spoke to parents and carers before school and with pupils throughout the day.

I considered the 26 responses to Parent View, and the seven responses to free text. I took into account the 14 responses to the pupils' survey and the eight responses to the staff survey.