

30 November 2018

Michaela De Barr  
Headteacher  
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North Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs De Barr

### **Short inspection of Pickering Community Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 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 your appointment in January 2018, you have quickly established a vision for the school which is shared by your deputy headteacher, all staff and governors. You lead your welcoming school with a strong sense of purpose, managing the recent staffing and governor changes effectively and building further on the school's existing strengths. Your evaluation of these strengths and what the school needs to do to improve further is accurate.

You lead a dedicated staff team with enthusiasm and respect. Consequently, all staff members say that they are supported and that the school has a culture of high aspiration for all staff and pupils.

The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. They appreciate the way in which leaders manage the transition procedures for pupils moving from the partner infant schools to Pickering Junior School. Parents say that their children settle quickly into Year 3 and feel valued and cared for by the staff. Parents describe a 'demanding curriculum' which offers 'engaging topics' and 'extra-curricular opportunities'. One parent said, 'This is a very happy school. Staff really care about the well-being and the progress of the pupils.'

Pupils share parents' positive view of the quality of the curriculum. They say that they enjoy their learning and can identify work in English and mathematics of which they are most proud. They describe, articulately, the exciting science experiments, sports activities and art lessons. They appreciate the opportunities to have bespoke music tuition, such as learning the trumpet. They also talk zealously about the

products they have designed and created with the school's 3D printer. The skills and knowledge that pupils are developing in these subjects are preparing them well for their secondary education.

You, and other leaders before you, have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors wanted more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving. Pupils now demonstrate the necessary mathematical skills and knowledge to practise and apply when they solve problems. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress by the end of Year 6, to reach standards which are above the national average.

The previous inspection also identified that the most able pupils' work was not always challenging. When you and I observed teaching, and looked in pupils' books, we recognised how all pupils, not only the most able, complete work which consistently challenges them in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards in these subjects has improved to be above the national average over the last three years. The proportion of children reaching a higher standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling is the exception to this. Therefore, this was an area to explore during this inspection.

There have recently been several changes to governance, including newly appointed chair and vice-chair of governors. Since her appointment, the chair of governors has been determined in her commitment to further develop strong governance. This has included commissioning a skills audit, reviewing the governor development plan and improving the induction process for new governors. Governors are committed to quickly developing their skills and understanding their roles and legal duties. As a result, governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are determined to support and challenge you to improve the school further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a strong culture of safeguarding, with pupils' safety and welfare being paramount. You and other designated safeguarding leads make sure that training for staff and governors is up to date and understood by everyone. All records are organised and precise, with appropriate checks made on all staff and volunteers who work with the pupils.

You have effective systems in place to identify and record any concerns about pupils and you have supported staff so that they have a good understanding of how to follow this system. Consequently, you quickly identify pupils and families who are vulnerable, and you take swift and appropriate actions to support them.

Parents and staff agree that pupils are kept safe in school. Pupils say that they feel safe and, for example, demonstrate a strong understanding of the dangers of cyber

bullying. This is the result of the culture of safeguarding, which permeates all school activities, in addition to the strong curriculum that includes teaching pupils to be responsible and confident to keep themselves safe. Pupils can talk with maturity about the rareness of pupils being bullied. They say that this is because of the high expectations that staff have of pupils behaving well. One pupil said, 'Sometimes there are friendship issues, but the teachers help us to sort those and teach us to be better friends to each other.'

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked closely at how you were using any additional funding for pupils to support them to make good progress. In 2018, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) made strong progress across key stage 2. A higher proportion of pupils with SEND reached the expected standards in mathematics than in the reading, writing and the grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. Most-able pupils with SEND reached higher than national averages in reading. This is a direct result of effective actions taken by leaders regarding assessment, provision and teaching support for pupils with SEND. Leaders are clear about what further development is required for this group of pupils because of their precise and regular checks on how well the pupils are learning.
- In 2018, standards declined for disadvantaged pupils. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading improved over the last three years, progress rates in reading and writing were below the national average. Leaders' analysis of progress rates for disadvantaged pupils across the school informed them that some pupils did not make sufficient progress in the last academic year. You acted promptly to identify the cause. There is now a detailed plan in place which identifies barriers to learning and targeted additional activities. You and your governors have already identified improving pupils' progress rates as a priority on your current school improvement plan.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test, at the end of key stage 2, has been below the national average for two years. Work in lessons and in books showed that pupils are developing a secure understanding of grammar. The focused work on developing ambitious vocabulary is improving the quality and fluency of pupils' writing. Pupils' spelling ability is not as strong. Work in pupils' books shows that they are competent at using spelling patterns which are listed within the national curriculum for their year group. However, pupils often make errors when they spell words which were studied in previous year groups. This is because the spellings have not been learned accurately. You agree that teachers should focus on enabling the pupils to revise the spelling patterns from previous years so that their spelling improves, and pupils are supported to reach the higher standards.
- Over the past three years, there has been a downward trend in the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in science by the end of key stage 2. Work in science books shows that the pupils in Years 3 and 4 are skilled and knowledgeable in predicting, enquiring about and reaching conclusions. They use scientific language accurately because of the precise feedback that teachers give

to them. In Years 5 and 6, pupils build on these skills and their work reflects the competence of learners who can confidently justify their scientific ideas. The leader of science checks the standard of work in pupils' books regularly. She has been proactive in working with other schools to ensure that assessment is accurate. Pupils' books indicate that pupils are currently making strong progress in science across the school. Leaders regularly evaluate this so that pupils are equipped with the necessary scientific knowledge and key skills when transferring to secondary school.

- Staff investigate any absences immediately to check that pupils are safe when they are not in school. This approach has led to individual families being supported effectively and improved rates of attendance and punctuality. The attendance rate was above the national average in 2018 and it continues to improve.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to sharpen the systems that check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in reading and writing
- teachers provide pupils with opportunities to revise the spelling patterns from previous years so that their spelling improves, and they are supported to reach the higher standards.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the 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

Alison Aitchison  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders, governors and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. I met, formally, with a group of pupils to discuss their attitudes to learning and their views of the school. I heard a group of pupils from Years 3 and 6 read and discussed reading with them.

Together with you or your deputy headteacher, I made visits to classrooms to observe pupils learning and took a learning walk around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities as well as discussing the information from the school's assessment system. I discussed the work of the

school, including the procedures and processes in place for safeguarding. I also viewed documentation, including the checks that you have made on the quality of teaching and governor meeting minutes.

I considered 26 free-text responses from parents and the views of the 49 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I considered 26 views from the staff survey and 61 responses to the online pupil survey.