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Mrs Rebecca Townsend
Headteacher
Hinchliffe Mill Junior and Infant School
Waterside Lane
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Dear Mrs Townsend

Short inspection of Hinchliffe Mill Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2019, 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 your predecessor's school was judged to be good in January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There has been a change in leadership since then and in your role as the new headteacher you have gained the complete trust and confidence of staff and parents and carers. One parent said, 'The school is clean, safe and well managed and it is an absolute delight to send my child. I could not want for a better start for him in his academic life.'

There have been many changes to the well-trained governing body, and governors are using their extensive skills well to heighten challenge to the senior leadership team. Recently appointed governors shared examples of sharp questions generated following forensic analysis of the pupils' 2018 test results. Governors' thorough evaluation of performance data, along with your accurate assessment of the quality of teaching, have led to leaders identifying the right priorities for improvement. The new governing body has already improved the quality of its strategic planning, and governors are beginning to hold leaders more rigorously to account. Your Kirklees learning partner recognises the high quality of the new governing body. Governors recognise their duty of care to you, and they are achieving the right balance between challenge and support.

Leaders have a clear vision and shared ethos that has had a positive effect on further improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The pupils are a delight; well mannered, confident and excited about learning. The opportunities that Year 6 pupils are given to take responsibility, such as answering the telephone

when they cover the school office at lunchtime, is helping to prepare them for the next steps in their education and employment.

Middle leaders are committed to improving teaching in all subjects and they have clear plans to raise standards. These include exciting and ambitious ideas to further develop the wider curriculum, including using the school's beautiful locality more creatively, when teaching subjects such as geography and history.

Leaders have had some success in addressing the areas for improvement that were identified in the last inspection. Although the progress pupils are making in mathematics has improved, leaders have been less successful in improving the rate of progress pupils are making in reading and writing, especially for the most able pupils and between girls and boys. We focused our attention on English during this inspection to see how much progress pupils are making now.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained and know how to respond to concerns about pupils' care and welfare.

When visitors sign in, they are given very clear guidance about the school's expectations to ensure that pupils are kept safe. For example, visitors are not allowed to use their mobile phones in school or to take photographs of pupils.

Pupils say that there is no bullying in school and that they feel safe. Pupils are able to explain their secure understanding of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' subject knowledge in the teaching of English and mathematics is good.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very well developed and even the youngest children are confident speakers. Older pupils have a wide vocabulary and they have a secure grasp of technical language, such as alliteration and personification.
- Teachers hear pupils read frequently. Leaders value the positive effect of parents and carers reading so regularly with their children at home, giving further opportunities for frequent practice and developing pupils' confidence. The useful notes shared between parents and teachers, using home-school reading records, help to solve any problems quickly and further accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teachers are skilful in the teaching of phonics, including in Reception, and the secure and positive relationships in classes build pupils' confidence and encourage them to 'have a go'.
- Budget pressures have limited the number of high-quality reading books available. Older pupils enjoy the fact that they are allowed to read their books from home in school. Pupils choose to take in a combination of challenging

books, such as those in the Harry Potter series, and easier texts that they read for relaxation and enjoyment. Year 6 boys were particularly enthusiastic in describing this, and leaders think this increased interest and engagement will help pupils achieve the target that leaders have set to reduce the gap in reading results between boys and girls.

- In some of the English lessons we observed together, and in the work we saw in pupils' English books, we agreed that there is insufficient challenge to the most able pupils and this is holding them back. When I spoke to pupils about this, I asked them whether they thought the work they are given is hard enough and they said 'no'. One pupil said, 'Sometimes teachers go over and over things too much and we think, "we get this, can't we just move on?"' Another pupil said, 'I often have to wait and listen politely when I'm feeling bored inside.' Leaders are not satisfied that so few Year 6 pupils have been able to reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics, with none achieving this combined score in 2018.
- We saw some high-quality writing in the pupils' English books and less frequent examples of pupils writing creatively in other subjects. A good example of pupils practising using the correct grammar, style and formality to suit the purpose of their writing followed a geography lesson in Year 6. Pupils wrote up an investigation, having made papier-mâché volcanoes. One child wrote, 'We investigated which substances, when mixed together, would make a reaction that would replicate lava erupting from a volcano.'
- Opportunities for pupils to write creatively to this high standard, in subjects other than English, are not always taken and so the progress pupils are making in writing is not yet good enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching, to make sure that there is sufficient challenge for the most able pupils in reading and writing
- further develop the wider curriculum, so that pupils have sufficient opportunities to write creatively in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed English lessons together in every class, including phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1. Pupils' work in all year groups and in all subjects was scrutinised alongside senior leaders. Meetings were held with you, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the school business manager, a group of six governors (including the chair of the governing body), and the Kirklees learning partner.

Various documents were evaluated, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's monitoring records. I met with a focus group of the most able pupils. I also listened to several pupils read. Safeguarding documents were reviewed. The responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from 11 staff and 17 pupils were considered. The 19 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were also taken into account, along with comments made personally to me by several parents bringing their children to school at the start of the day.