

28 February 2019

Mrs Linda Shaw
Acting Headteacher
Norristhorpe Junior and Infant School
School Street
Norristhorpe
Liversedge
West Yorkshire
WF15 7AW

Dear Mrs Shaw

Short inspection of Norristhorpe Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As the substantive deputy headteacher, you have ably stepped up to the role of acting headteacher, a role you will continue in until the headteacher returns to her post from maternity leave in April. Along with the headteacher, you have had a clear and successful focus on developing the skills of other leaders in the school. Leaders feel empowered and make successful improvements in their areas of responsibility. You, your acting deputy headteacher and acting assistant headteachers work well together and staff spoken with comment on the good, clear levels of communication that exist within school. You have high expectations, and this provides a strong sense of purpose which motivates staff and pupils to achieve well. All staff members who responded to the staff questionnaire said that they were proud to work at the school.

You have maintained the many strengths identified at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and attend regularly. They behave exceptionally well in class and around school and want to make progress. Pupils are polite and friendly towards one another and have very positive relationships with their teachers. Parents and carers who made their views known are very supportive of the school and value the work of you and your team. As one parent commented on Parent View, 'I believe that my son is attending one of the best schools in the country.' Another parent commented to me that, 'This is a

wonderful school, I can't wait for my youngest child to start.'

By the end of key stage 2, overall pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You have rightly identified that the progress made by middle- and high-attaining pupils in reading could be stronger, and more of these pupils could reach the higher standard. This is a priority in your school development plan.

At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to improve achievement in the early years so that by the end of Reception, the gap between boys and girls, particularly in writing, is narrowed. You and your leaders have acted decisively to address this issue. During the inspection, I observed children, including boys, enthusiastically involved in writing for a range of purposes, both indoors and outdoors. In 2018, the achievement of boys and girls by the end of Reception, in all areas of learning, including writing, was similar. You were also asked in the previous inspection to ensure that pupils were given opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. As I looked at pupils' books, I could see high-quality writing in a range of subjects including science, history and geography. Classroom displays of pupils' writing are attractive and celebrate pupils' achievements well. As a result of your focus on this area, pupils' attainment in writing has risen over the last three years by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Governance is strong. Governors bring a range of very relevant skills, knowledge and expertise to their roles. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance and receive useful and timely information to allow them to carry out their roles effectively. Governors provide good support to you and regularly hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make across school. Governors recognise that the success criteria used in the school development plan are not able to be measured well enough. As a result, they cannot yet evaluate some aspects of school improvement effectively enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks on the suitability of all those who work or volunteer in the school are carried out rigorously. Staff and governors have undertaken training in keeping pupils safe. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. There are clear procedures in place for them to share any concerns they may have about a pupil.

The caring relationships that have been established between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel safe. Pupils have confidence that adults in school will help them if they have a problem and they know that it will be dealt with quickly. Pupils told me that bullying very rarely happens in school. They are confident that an adult would deal with it for them, swiftly and successfully, if incidents did occur.

You have put in place effective arrangements to ensure that pupils use the internet safely. Pupils know to click on 'Hector the Protector' if something worries them while using the internet and know not to disclose personal information to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry we would follow during this inspection. The first line of enquiry looked at how effectively leaders are improving the progress of middle- and high-attaining pupils in reading by the end of key stage 2. This is because in 2018 the progress of these pupils was below average and in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.
- You have ensured that the culture for reading has been improved. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They told me about their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo and David Walliams. They appreciate the variety of books on offer in their classrooms and are looking forward to visiting to the local library.
- You have encouraged teachers to use an approach to teaching reading where a high-quality text is studied as a class. The text is read together, and follow-up activities test pupils' understanding of the text. Teachers probe pupils' knowledge and understanding through their use of effective questioning and prompts. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils demonstrated their understanding of an excerpt from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth', whereas Year 4 pupils enthusiastically found evidence from an excerpt of Dahl's 'Charlie and the chocolate factory', to explain whether Charlie's family were rich or poor. The school's own assessment information indicates that pupils are now making better progress. We agreed that you would continue to closely monitor the teaching of reading, as, in some classes, middle- and high-attaining pupils are not always given texts or work that enables them to use a range of more-complex reading skills to develop their understanding further.
- My next line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are addressing the progress middle-attaining pupils make by the end key stage 2 in mathematics. This is because in Year 6 in 2017 and 2018 middle-attaining pupils made weaker progress than other pupils from their individual starting points.
- Your mathematics leader has had a positive effect on the teaching of mathematics. She has provided regular training for staff, raised expectations of teachers and pupils and developed a consistent approach to teaching mathematics using fluency, problem-solving and reasoning. This is paying dividends. The school's own assessment information, and evidence in pupils' books, indicates that pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, are making good progress.
- Finally, I looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils enjoy and value school and take part in all of the curriculum. In lessons, these pupils work hard. As teachers are becoming more aware of the needs of these pupils, they are now making strong progress over time. Leaders hold teachers accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and ensure that detailed plans are in place to support their learning. Should they fall behind, the extra support provided for these pupils helps many of them to catch up. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making good progress. Previous differences in their achievement compared to others in the school are diminishing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers develop pupils' more-complex reading comprehension skills, especially to enable more middle- and high-attaining pupils to make stronger progress and attain at the higher standard in reading
- the effect of actions identified in the school development plan can be accurately measured.

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

Mark Randall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the substantive headteacher, your acting deputy headteacher, your two acting assistant headteachers and your English and mathematics leaders. I also spoke to eight governors. I spoke informally with pupils during lessons and at lunchtime. I visited classes with you and the substantive headteacher, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work.

I took account of 20 free-text responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I met with parents before school. I also evaluated a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness, the school development plan, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement and attendance. I undertook a review of the school's website.