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Mrs Sue Knowles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Knowles

Short inspection of Amotherby Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Along with your capable team of middle and senior leaders, you have maintained the momentum of improvement. You have been systematic in developing the aspects highlighted in the school's previous inspection report to improve the school further.

Teaching in the school continues to improve. Teachers have made sure that the classrooms are bright and lively places to learn. Displays celebrate pupils' strong writing skills, promote their confident reading skills and provide easily accessible resources for pupils to help them with their learning. Teachers continue to ask challenging and probing questions. Increasingly this is focused on developing pupils' reasoning skills. Pupils typically expect to be asked to explain the reasons for their answers. Some teachers are very skilled in using questions to support pupils in reflecting on how and why they have arrived at answers, and others are developing this highly effective practice quickly. Consequently, the quality of teaching is strong, and pupils are making rapid progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills.

You and your team have focused on improving pupils' writing skills across the curriculum, and this is paying dividends. Pupils are used to evaluating their own work and teachers support them gaining in new vocabulary. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident in working out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Pupils write fluently and for a range of purposes and audiences. Consequently, the number of

pupils who reach the higher standards in writing has risen steadily in recent years. The previous inspection noted improvements to the teaching of phonics. You have made sure this has continued to be effective. As a result, pupils are building effective strategies to support their reading and the proportion reaching the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average in 2018.

You and your team have successfully created an environment in which pupils of all ages live up to the school's motto of 'active, aspire and achieve'. Pupils are developing strong basic skills and a genuine love of learning. You and your team have paid careful attention to the curriculum so that pupils enjoy a range of exciting activities which inspire them to do well. Pupils are developing resilience and a few that I spoke to told me that making mistakes is an important part of learning.

Leaders' planning of the curriculum is very effective in making sure that pupils' progress in each subject is considered carefully. Some aspects, such as pupils' writing and reading skills, are planned so that they improve progressively throughout pupils' time in school and across different subject areas. You and your leaders are beginning to take the same systematic approach to developing pupils' skills in reasoning, problem solving and investigation across all subjects and especially for younger pupils. However, this effective work is at an early stage and not fully embedded.

There is much to celebrate at this improving school. You, your leaders and governors are clear about the strengths of the school and what needs to improve. However, leaders' development planning, including that for the use of the pupil premium funding, lacks sharpness. Plans do not include specific interim checks on the school's progress towards the ambitious targets you have set. As a result, while you and your governors can see that improvements have been made, you cannot be precise in evaluating if there has been enough improvement to keep the school on track.

The school's website was not compliant with the Department for Education's requirements at the time of this inspection. This was because the evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium strategy was not published, and several required policies were very outdated. You acted quickly to rectify this before the end of the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that any concerns staff may have that a child might be at risk of harm are reported promptly and responses are timely. Staff are well trained and understand the signs and symptoms to which they need to be alert. Teachers and other adults know what, and to whom, they should report their concerns.

Pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including how

to stay safe online. The pupils I spoke to knew when they should seek adult help. They said that they trusted adults in the school to act on their behalf, should they need it. They understood the different forms that bullying can take, and the harm that it can do. Parents that I spoke to, and the vast majority of those who responded to the school's own survey of parents' views and Ofsted's survey, indicated that they felt their children were safe. They also said that any instances of bullying or poor behaviour were dealt with effectively by your team.

However, record-keeping and staff files are somewhat disorganised. While all the appropriate checks are carried out and actions are appropriate and timely, you have not ensured that files are organised in a systematic way so that information can be easily and quickly retrieved.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is lively. You and your leaders have given careful thought to the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils will need by the time they leave school. Leaders are ambitious and passionate about helping pupils to develop a love of learning and be able to apply their skills to new learning.
- You and your team identified that pupils needed to develop a more secure and broader understanding of mathematics. Teachers have worked hard to make sure that all pupils, including the most able, develop fluent arithmetic skills so that they can confidently work out challenging problems for themselves. To support this, teachers are successfully encouraging pupils to offer reasons for their answers. This successful approach is not as well embedded with younger pupils or in other subjects.
- Leaders recently identified girls, in particular, were not reaching the higher standards in mathematics. Teachers have been successful in improving girls' confidence by using a number of different strategies. For example, girls now have frequent opportunity to teach a peer a new skill, or take a classmate through how they have solved a problem. In addition, teachers have also made sure that pupils have the skills to reflect on their learning and that they are equipped with the right vocabulary to talk about their feelings. As a result, girls are developing the ability to say precisely why they feel less confident with some activities, and what helps them to become more confident.
- The exciting curriculum is supported by trips and visits, giving pupils a range of memorable experiences. For example, following a visit to Ryedale Folk Museum, Year 4, particularly the boys, were inspired to write lively accounts of Anglo-Saxon life. At the time of this inspection, Year 5 and 6 were working with an external company to produce a play in a day, inspired by their work on Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'.
- You and your team have been effective in promoting pupils' reading. The environment in classrooms strongly supports the development of pupils' reading. Each class has designed their own reading corner, which provides cosy spaces where pupils can settle down and enjoy their reading. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and they are encouraged to read at home through competitions. They

are very keen to win the coveted prizes of brand-new books.

- Pupils were excited to tell me about the authors they had met in school. Pupils spoke about wanting to be authors and reading a wider variety of books, as a result of these inspirational sessions.
- As a result of the effective work to strengthen reading skills, pupils have an assured, and increasingly sophisticated, range of vocabulary. Less-able pupils are confident in using effective strategies to sound out and read unfamiliar words. They are equally positive in working out the meaning of words and phrases. The most able readers read with expression and enjoy expanding the range of books they read.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders' development planning is sharpened, and safeguarding record-keeping is streamlined
- recent improvements to the curriculum are embedded so that younger pupils' reasoning, problem-solving and investigation skills are developed
- leaders' planning for the progression of pupils' skills and knowledge is precise across different subjects and over time
- the school's website continues to be compliant and is kept up to date.

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

Joan Hewitt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other senior and middle leaders and four members of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons with you. We looked at pupils' work together and I looked at some work independently. I spoke informally with pupils and I heard two pupils read. I looked at the results from Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and considered 36 responses, including 10 written comments. I evaluated the responses of 10 staff to Ofsted's survey. I also took account of the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views. I examined a range of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.