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Ms Jane Astrid Devane
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Devane

Short inspection of Shire Oak VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leaders regularly review and evaluate the impact of initiatives on pupils' outcomes. This has resulted in the improvements you have made since your last inspection. You have established an effective working relationship with schools in your local partnership, which has given you a broader perspective on the effectiveness of your school.

You have created a school with a caring ethos and you know your families well. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. Nearly all parents who responded feel that the school is well led and managed, and this is reflected in their comments. Parents talk about the nurturing and positive approach that the school adopts to support pupils. Parents value the warm and welcoming environment and the school's emphasis on providing a rounded education for their children.

During our learning walk together, we observed well-motivated pupils, who were attentive in lessons and focused on their work. There are good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are confident that the school's behaviour policy is used fairly. They have a thorough understanding of consequences and have a full understanding of why good behaviour is important for effective learning.

Following the previous inspection, the school was tasked with closing any achievement gaps between pupils who attend the school from Reception and those

who join later in their school career. Since the previous inspection, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils joining the school during key stage 2. Where this is the case, parents speak positively of moving their child to Shire Oak. Work in books as well as the school's own assessment information show that the rates of progress and attainment for these few pupils is not significantly different to that of their peers.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching spelling in key stage 2. In addition, you were tasked with ensuring that pupils in key stage 1 are always appropriately challenged to make stronger progress. Work in pupils' books shows that the school has been effective in improving the standard of pupils' spelling in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Younger pupils use their phonics to decode in their reading and apply these skills to their spelling in writing. While key stage 1 achievement in reading and mathematics at greater depth is similar to the national average, this is not the case in writing. Likewise, higher standards in writing at key stage 2, as well as the progress pupils make from key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in writing, have been slower to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

With governors, you ensure that the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils is effective. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils and pupils say they feel safe, and 99% of parents who responded to parent View agree. Pupils talk informatively about what they have learned about staying safe on the internet, and they show a mature understanding of substance abuse. Pupils say there is little or no bullying in school. Even so, they have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and the procedures for dealing with it.

The recent external safeguarding audit is a positive testament to the school's capacity to care for its pupils and ensure that procedures are implemented to protect them. Staff and governors understand their obligations for safeguarding and take appropriate action when necessary. They liaise with outside agencies, and this provides pupils and families with the support they need. You make good use of the electronic system you have recently introduced to monitor the safety and well-being of pupils.

There are systems in place to follow up pupils' absences, and this has been effective in improving attendance. You have worked closely with families to successfully improve the attendance of some of those who are persistently absent.

Inspection findings

- You use the school's assessment information effectively to identify priorities for improvement so that pupils achieve well. You respond quickly to address weaknesses and have accurately pinpointed what needs to be done this year. This is clearly set out in the school's improvement plan.
- You have identified that pupils' achievement in writing is not as good as in

mathematics and reading, although the improvements in pupils' spelling and grammar have improved. As a result, you are making better use of quality texts as a stimulus for writing. This has been particularly effective in key stage 2. Pupils in year 6 told me how much they had been inspired by some of the books chosen by their class teachers as a starting point for writing.

- Pupils in both key stages shared their enjoyment of reading. Pupils in key stage 1 used their phonics to decode unknown words and were able to discuss what they had already read. In key stage 2, pupils are generally making good progress in reading. Older pupils are confident in choosing a range of fiction and non-fiction books, and in expressing reasons for their choice. They also explained that they are encouraged by their teacher to read books which challenge them. However, pupils were less confident in discussing how they use authors' styles and techniques to influence their writing.
- In mathematics, checks on pupils' achievement in Year 2 indicate an improvement in the progress they make. Work observed and discussion with pupils indicate that, for the most able pupils in key stage 1, expectations are not always high enough. Sometimes work is well pitched to offer suitable challenge, but this is not always the case. The most able pupils have opportunities to become fluent in aspects of mathematics. However, they are not always given work which challenges their thinking or requires them to apply basic mathematical skills to solve problems.
- The leader of English and a representative of the local authority recently carried out a book scrutiny of pupils' writing. As a result, the leader of English has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' writing. While the improvements in pupils' spelling and grammar are evident, pupils do not always organise their writing effectively. In key stage 1, the most able pupils are not always as productive as they could be. For example, they do not always complete work of sufficient length. In key stage 2, too few pupils are achieving higher standards of writing, because their writing is not always well organised and editing is sometimes too focussed on technicalities.
- During the inspection, I looked at the quality of learning in other subjects across the curriculum. You have successfully focused on improving science teaching. This is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm and their ability to articulate clearly how they carried out a fair test when conducting science experiments. They confidently use and understand scientific vocabulary when explaining what they have learned. Pupils talked with excitement about the planetarium, which had been set up in school, and which had helped them understand the scope of space for their topic 'Starlight'.
- In other subjects, the curriculum is thoughtfully planned and well sequenced, the selection of content is relevant and often practical, as well as being supported by visits and visitors. Pupils talked about their 'favourite' subjects, which reflected a wide range of interest across subjects such as art, geography and history. Pupils recounted their visits to local places of worship such as a mosque and mandir. These visits had engaged their interest, as well as educating them in how others represent their faith.
- Governors are keen and actively involved in school life. They hold you to account

through regular meetings. They have a clear intent to improve the quality of the curriculum where this is necessary and have discussed this as a governing body.

- Governors are aware that the school has been less successful in raising pupils' attainment of higher standards in writing and are closely monitoring this aspect of pupils' achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching of writing improves so that pupils attain higher standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 by:
 - having higher expectations in key stage 1
 - improving pupils' editing skills
 - helping pupils in key stage 2 to gain a better understanding of authors' styles so that they can develop their own writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Heath
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your subject leader for writing. Together, we observed several lessons. With the subject leader, I looked at pupils' writing books. I reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to the safety and welfare of pupils. I spoke to pupils about behaviour, safety and their enjoyment of school and the curriculum. I listened to some pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read and discussed their enjoyment, and experience, of reading. I met with the chair of the governing body and other governors, as well as speaking to a representative from the local authority.

I took into account the 106 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well their comments submitted to the inspection team. I considered the 47 responses from the pupils' survey as well as the 26 contributions to the staff survey.