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Mrs Louise Brown
Headteacher
Headfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School
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Dear Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Headfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 2019 with Janet Keefe, Ofsted Inspector, 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 July 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 have taken a research-driven approach to school improvement. Classes are now organised differently. Teachers agree that this has raised their expectations of what pupils should know and be able to do and does not place a ceiling on pupils' achievement. The new organisation is also aiding more effective links with pupils' learning across the curriculum. A new curriculum approach has been adopted. It incorporates learning from first-hand experiences and a focus on language development, with the aim of raising attainment in English and mathematics.

At the last inspection, you were tasked with improving the quality of teaching. Leaders' monitoring is effective in identifying aspects of teaching that could be improved further. This has resulted in support and feedback for individuals, including whole-school training to make the necessary improvements. You have made adaptations to the curriculum in response to leaders' checks on how well pupils are keeping up with the pace of the new expectations.

Staff feel valued and supported to develop their teaching and evaluate its impact on pupils' learning. They are encouraged to observe good practice and take on board additional training, for example, by shadowing leaders and completing online qualifications to further their expertise. There is a strong team ethos and a growing culture of continual learning and development.

You have been keen to respond pupils' weaker reading progress in the past. Consequently, you have prioritised pupils' love of reading and their vocabulary development. This is central to all teaching. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read high-quality texts and explore unfamiliar vocabulary to support their understanding. This has had a positive impact for current pupils who are now making much stronger progress. You explain that pupils who join the school without a secure phonic knowledge need to gain this as quickly as possible to help their reading fluency.

Work in pupils' books shows that they are developing their reading, writing and mathematical knowledge well. Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are particularly strong. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to a range of resources which they use independently to support them in producing work of high quality. For example, in English lessons, pupils use resources such as spelling mats, subject vocabulary sheets and mini thesauruses to good effect. However, pupils' handwriting varies in quality. For example, some writing is not completed with attention to presentation and use of joins. Staff are not alert enough to these lapses and some similar errors go unchecked and, therefore, persist for too long.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are passionate about the importance of safeguarding. You have made sure that procedures are effective and records are detailed and of high quality. Well-established systems ensure that pupils' safety is top priority. Training is successful in helping staff to recognise and respond to signs of concern.

Pupils say that the curriculum provides lots of opportunities for them to learn how to keep safe and manage risks appropriately. Consequently, they can talk with confidence about how to stay safe, for example when they are online or crossing a road. Pupils trust the adults in school to deal effectively with any inappropriate behaviour that might occur.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 was below average in 2016, 2017 and 2018. In response, you have placed reading at the heart of the school's work. For example, there is a library club at lunchtime, an outdoor reading lounge, and a well-stocked library with books that pupils take good care of. Pupils choose books that are organised by their reading stage. They also have access to books of their choice that can be taken home to read for pleasure or to develop their interests. Pupils can talk confidently about what they are reading and can share opinions with each other when they have read the same book. They enjoy the rewards and incentives they have for reading and say that this has encouraged them to read more frequently.
- You have made sure that the curriculum for reading now includes daily opportunities for pupils to practise reading and complete comprehension activities. Additionally, the use of class texts, which are often related to pupils' learning in other subjects, supports pupils in securing their knowledge across the

curriculum. Your adaptations to the curriculum and the whole-school emphasis on reading have been successful in creating a positive reading culture. The impact of your actions can be seen in the increasing proportion of current pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standards in reading for their age.

- Some pupils are not secure in their phonic knowledge when they join the school. Phonics interventions are in place for these pupils to help them to catch up quickly. Pupils enjoy the competitive element to these sessions and challenge themselves to read the sounds at pace. However, the books that these pupils read contain words that are not easily decodable, and too many common exception words to which they have not been exposed. This means they frequently guess words and are not able to read with enough fluency. Additionally, when these pupils read aloud, adults do not routinely correct them if they mispronounce or guess a word. This hinders their understanding. You have already begun planning the purchase of additional resources and further training for staff.
- There have been ongoing adaptations to the curriculum in other subjects beyond reading. Subject leaders have mapped out the curriculum in their areas of responsibility to check that pupils' knowledge is able to build effectively over time. Leaders make checks on pupils' learning to see how well the curriculum is supporting their progress. For example, the art leader meets with pupils to discuss their learning and identify any gaps. Following this, she provides support for teachers in how to plan to address any identified gaps. You have also made sure that pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular experiences and opportunities. Clubs are particularly well considered so they enhance pupils' learning in their lessons. For example, a science club enabled an increasing proportion of pupils to reach the expected standard for science.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the reading curriculum is developed further to support pupils who enter key stage 2 without having secured their phonic knowledge, by ensuring that:
 - the books that pupils use to practise reading match precisely the sounds they know and the common exception words to which they have been introduced
 - staff routinely correct pupils' inaccurate pronunciation of unfamiliar words to help develop their reading accuracy and fluency
- staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' handwriting so that pupils quickly develop a neat and joined style.

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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding leader, the attendance officer, a range of subject leaders and a group of staff. A meeting was held with four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. Meetings also took place with a representative of the local authority, a representative of the diocese and a group of staff.

Inspectors evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and information about safeguarding and attendance. Inspectors visited classrooms with senior leaders to observe teaching and learning and scrutinise the work in a sample of pupils' books. Four pupils read their reading books to an inspector and an inspector held a meeting with a group of eight pupils.

An inspector spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 35 responses to the staff survey and the 106 responses to the pupil survey were also considered.