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Mr Jonathan Wanless
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wanless

Short inspection of Seamer and Irton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2018, 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 June 2014.

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 leadership team are passionate about providing the best possible educational experiences for pupils. To this end, you approach your roles with an abundance of energy and enthusiasm which permeates the school community. Consequently, pupils are excited about their learning and demonstrate high levels of motivation.

You rightly recognised that pupils' outcomes in 2016 and 2017 were not good enough. Although the proportions of pupils reaching the expected levels by the end of Year 6 were broadly average for reading, writing and mathematics, too few pupils exceeded this standard. Additionally, the proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standards by the end of the early years and key stage 1 were below average. Given that children enter the school with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age, you acknowledge that this did not represent good progress. However, you have tackled this with suitable urgency by raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. You and your leadership team have carefully selected initiatives which have strengthened the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Across subjects, improvements are leading to higher proportions of current pupils working at, and above, age-expected standards. You are fully aware that further improvements to the early years will be necessary to enable children to reach their full potential.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, receive work that challenges them to think deeply and apply their skills. As a result, pupils are now given regular opportunities to extend their learning in a range of subjects. The recent introduction of a collaborative approach to learning has been particularly successful in deepening the understanding of the most able pupils. You acknowledge that this area of work would benefit from further focus and refinement.

You were also asked to strengthen the middle leadership of the school. You prioritised the training and development of middle leaders, which has led to them becoming increasingly adept in checking that their actions are making a positive difference to pupils' outcomes. As a result, middle leaders are playing a crucial role in driving school improvement and ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is at least good. While this is encouraging, leaders (including governors) are not checking carefully enough that pupil premium funding is effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils' learning and attendance.

You have instilled a culture of continual self-improvement in the school. This has resulted in both pupils and staff reflecting on their performance regularly and seeking ways to improve. In lessons, pupils are supported in this by working collaboratively with their peers. Similarly, staff are given frequent opportunities for focused professional dialogue and coaching with colleagues. Your own reflection has allowed you to access advice from the local authority and external experts, as well as building links with other schools. These partnerships have proved helpful in further strengthening the school's effectiveness.

You place significant emphasis on pupils accessing additional activities and experiences across the curriculum to enhance their learning. This increases pupils' enjoyment of their learning significantly. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 were on a residential trip to London, and the rest of the school were enthused by activities relating to 'Diversity Week'. Pupils say that they particularly benefit from the additional sports, music and art activities available to them. Pupils form a secure understanding of the importance of democracy through participation in voting activities which mirror all local and national political decisions. Additionally, pupils develop their leadership skills through taking on a range of responsibilities from school councillor to register monitor. Consequently, the maturity and confidence pupils show is impressive.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Senior leaders and governors carry out weekly checks on procedures and make adjustments based on their findings. This meticulous approach has ensured that all staff are clear about their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe. The designated safeguarding officers work diligently to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate, timely support. You have plans in place to further strengthen your system of record-keeping in relation to this.

Pupils, parents, carers and staff say that the school is a safe place and that bullying is very rare. Pupils are knowledgeable about the potential risks they may face online and are clear about how to stay safe.

Pupils' attendance is broadly average. However, you recognise that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils lags behind that of their peers. You are also keen to reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent, as you know that this is currently too high. Plans are in place to tackle these issues.

Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. Adults' expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistently high, and as a result pupils are polite and respectful. Pupils' movement around school is calm and orderly, and playtimes are harmonious. Any instances of unacceptable behaviour are very rare. Pupils' behaviour in lessons shows that they have a conscientious attitude, an eagerness to learn and a desire to support the learning of others.

Inspection findings

- You had already identified that the teaching of reading needed to improve. In November, with the support of an external reading expert, leaders introduced a new approach to teaching reading. Through this initiative, leaders have ensured that teaching staff are proficient in developing pupils' reading comprehension skills. Pupils were observed challenging each other by posing questions requiring inference of the meaning of a text; early signs indicate that pupils are increasingly confident in using this skill.
- You have also ensured that pupils receive more opportunities to read for pleasure. Pupils read regularly to adults in school and at home, as well as having 'reading buddies', who are older pupils in the school. You have adapted systems to ensure that pupils choose books to match their level of attainment accurately. Through analysis of library borrowing rates and pupil and parent surveys, you are pinpointing, and acting to mitigate against, any potential barriers to pupils' reading for enjoyment. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy reading, and parents commented that they are impressed by the school's work to promote reading.
- In key stage 1, the teaching of phonics is effective in ensuring that pupils develop the essential skills of early reading. However, you are aware that this needs further strengthening in the early years, where children do not always receive phonics activities which are well matched to their needs.
- Most pupils have regular opportunities to practise and apply their English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their writing. They also benefit from writing about their wider curriculum topics for a range of purposes. Teachers have secure subject knowledge in relation to writing, and this ensures that pupils make good progress. Pupils take pride in their work and are ambitious in their word choices and sentence construction. This is because they understand that they are expected to do their very best. Leaders know that pupils do not consistently have sufficient opportunities to edit and improve their work. They are also aware that some lower-ability pupils need more regular opportunities to

build up their stamina by writing at length. Leaders have plans in place to tackle both of these aspects and, therefore, strengthen pupils' outcomes further.

- Following an audit by the local authority in February, leaders have made significant improvements to the early years provision, including introducing more activities to encourage early writing. However, you are only partway through completing your action plan and know that there is more work to do to ensure that adults use accurate assessments to plan appropriate activities for children.
- You and your leadership team have introduced strategies which are ensuring that pupils receive a diet of increasingly challenging activities. For example, in mathematics, pupils have more opportunities to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills. In science lessons, pupils develop their enquiry skills by designing experiments to explore their own hypotheses. The approach to collaborative learning you have introduced has been effective in encouraging pupils to discuss, debate and explore their own thinking. Through this initiative, pupils are deepening their knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. You plan to develop further the quality and consistency of each of these strategies.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is further strengthened by matching activities, including phonics teaching, closely to children's needs
- the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and attendance is measured carefully to aid leaders' evaluations and improvement planning.

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

Karine Hendley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, a governor and other senior and middle leaders. I observed teaching and learning jointly with you and the deputy headteacher in classes across all key stages. I scrutinised pupils' work alongside the English leader, and listened to pupils read. I spoke to pupils from each key stage and met with parents at the start of the school day. I considered 81 responses to

Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with the 79 free-text responses. I reviewed school documentation, including the school's improvement plans, minutes from governing body meetings and information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. I spoke with staff during the inspection and considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.