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Miss Jane Cawthorn
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Cawthorn

Short inspection of Howden Church of England Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2016, 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 your school was judged to be good in April 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion and commitment to the success of your school is evident in the high standards you set for adults and pupils. You have established an aspirational culture, rooted in the strong values reflected in the school's mission statement: 'roots to grow, wings to fly'. You and your staff instil strong ideals in the pupils and seek to stretch them personally, socially and academically. Your commitment to continuous improvement is evident in the school's success in earning and sustaining many awards, such as Investors in Pupils, Activemark, Artsmark Gold and a national ICT award.

Pupils enjoy school. They are becoming resilient young learners, who are well prepared for junior school. You effectively promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils, particularly through religious education and numerous opportunities for personal development. Pupils learn to value themselves and others and reflect on their place in the world. They are developing open minds and respectful attitudes to difference as they learn that 'we are all one family under the same sky'.

Pupils' outcomes remain good. The proportion of pupils attaining above-average standards by the time they leave the school has risen since the last inspection. Good achievement, along with excellent personal development, prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified some areas for improvement. One of these was to ensure a consistently good or better quality of teaching. This has been achieved. Teaching throughout the school is effective. Teachers challenge pupils of all abilities through skilled questioning and by setting tasks that are well matched to pupils' needs. The last inspection identified the need for the governing body to be more fully and rigorously involved in evaluating the school, so that leaders are held to account effectively. This, too, has been achieved. Governors are indeed effective in their duties. They know the school well because they ask the right questions, and make frequent visits to check that leaders' assertions about how the school is doing are accurate.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the chair of governors are diligent in your safeguarding duties. You are both trained in safer recruitment, taking proper measures to ensure that adults appointed to posts are suitable to work with children. Key staff have been trained in the 'Prevent' duty. You ensure that leaders and teachers carry out thorough risk assessments and governors regularly check that the premises are safe and well protected from intruders. An up-to-date child protection policy is in place, reflecting all the latest statutory guidance. Staff have been trained, so know what to do when they have concerns about any child. All of these measures help to keep children safe.

Inspection findings

- As the lead teacher, you are astute and insightful in your observations of teaching, and check regularly that the expectations you set are maintained. You know the relative strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Middle leaders accept responsibility for pupils' outcomes, and also check on the quality of teaching and learning. Together you work well to develop teachers' practice by strengthening any weaker aspects your monitoring identifies.
- Teachers use assessment well. The relatively new target card system means teachers, pupils and parents can see clearly what pupils know and can do, and helps teachers plan challenging tasks to help pupils consolidate and apply their learning. Teachers ask carefully worded questions that help pupils to think and explain their ideas. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is strong, so almost every pupil, by the time they leave the school, has reached the required early reading standard.
- Your new assessment system is a work in progress. It helps leaders and teachers to assess gaps in pupils' learning effectively. However, the strict application of the assessment criteria means that assessment information often shows pupils to be doing less well than they actually are.
- In 2015, half of the pupils in Year 2 reached above the expected standard for their age in reading, and over a third of pupils attained this level in mathematics and in writing. This is because of the good level of challenge teachers set for the most able pupils. Almost all pupils reached the age-related expectation. The gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils

and other pupils nationally has almost closed. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress.

- Over the last two years, pupils' achievement by the end of the early years has been good. The proportion of girls reaching a good level of development has been especially high. Boys have not performed as well as girls in reading and writing, although the proportion of boys reaching the early learning goals has been in line with national figures. Boys have not done as well as girls because there are not enough purposeful reading and writing opportunities included in the sorts of activities the boys choose to do.
- The gap between the achievement of boys and girls by the time they leave the school has narrowed considerably, particularly in reading and mathematics, but a wider gap remains in writing, where you recognise that a number of boys are currently working below the age-related level.
- Pupils benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum. As well as an appropriate, strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics, pupils have plenty of opportunities to do artwork, computer coding and science, for example, through varied, relevant topics. Pupils enjoy enrichment opportunities such as French and drama in their valued 'golden time'. Many pupils take part in additional activities, such as art club, recorder club, yoga, and learning to play the violin.
- You and your staff are preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are learning to respect diversity. This can be seen, for example, in the way they demonstrate a good knowledge about various religions. Pupils begin to learn about democracy by voting for school councillors, and have opportunities to begin to take on responsibility by becoming members of the 'eco team' and the 'fruit bunch'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- any achievement gap between boys and girls is closed, especially in writing
- resources in the early years are arranged so that they better meet the needs of boys, engaging them purposefully in opportunities to read and write.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed aspects of the school's work with you and middle leaders and held a meeting with four members of the governing body. I met with a few parents and considered the responses of 41 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses of 52 pupils to the pupil questionnaire and six responses from staff to the staff questionnaire. We both visited most classrooms together to observe teaching, and we examined samples of pupils' work. I listened to what pupils had to say about what it is like to be a child in the school, as well as observing them during break and lunchtimes. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school development plan and notes of governing body meetings. I also examined information about pupils' achievement.