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Mrs Catherine Pickles
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Dear Mrs Pickles

Short inspection of Cononley Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 December 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your recent appointment, your analysis of how the school is doing and what you and your team need to do to improve it further is ambitious, realistic and carefully detailed.

You have had a very positive impact. You have moved promptly and effectively to address the comparatively weaker performance of reading in the school. You have also established a culture of high expectations and openness in which both children and adults can thrive and do their best. This is having a very positive impact on the school and the wider community.

You are very clear about the benefits that good team-working can have on pupils' outcomes. You work closely with groups of schools in the area to help assure the accuracy of your school's assessment of pupils' progress and to share expertise and good practice. You also work closely and effectively with North Yorkshire local authority. The local authority monitors the work of your school effectively and supports you in your role.

Working with your team and with governors, you are improving the quality of the teaching of reading in the school. You are also raising the profile of reading within the school and the wider community. You have moved the library to the heart of the school and put great emphasis on encouraging reading as a real pleasure among

your pupils. They reported to me that they have noticed and welcome this emphasis. They told me that they like reading and can see the clear benefits that wide and thoughtful reading have on their wider learning and well-being. Parents also told me that reading is a growing strength at the school. You and your team, including governors, are clear that this work to improve reading is not yet complete. For example, there is a small number of pupils whose reading is not yet good enough for them to take their next steps in learning with confidence.

Your staff are very positive about your leadership. They are very clear that you are there to support and challenge them. They welcome the opportunities that you give all staff to improve and extend their practice. Your high expectations are having a very positive impact. The vast majority of parents agree that the school provides a good education for their children. All the parents and carers with whom I spoke during the inspection were very positive about the school. Your own surveys of parent views support this. Ofsted's online survey of parent views shows high levels of satisfaction. All the parents who responded said that they would recommend your school to others.

Future success at the school will depend on developing further the capacity of leadership. You are very aware that when you took on the school you needed to address a number of issues urgently. This required you to lead 'from the front' and take on many aspects of the leadership of the school. I agree with your view that in order to take the school to the next level more members of staff need to be involved and responsible for more of the actions of the school. Your plans and actions to develop this leadership 'at every level' are well under way. It is clear that key areas such as the leadership of the provision for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and that of mathematics are well developed and effective. It is too early to assess the impact of the other aspects of leadership you are currently addressing. However, there is clear evidence, supported by governors and the local authority, that your plans are very sound and based on robust and diligent analysis.

At the previous inspection in January 2012 the school was asked to raise attainment in mathematics. During this inspection, when I spoke with pupils and looked in their books, it was clear that, on the whole, they are making good progress in mathematics. You and your mathematics leaders shared with me your very recent monitoring of work and progress in mathematics. This shows that good progress is being made. The unvalidated outcomes to summer 2016 tests in mathematics are strong. The school environment and the displays on walls are bright and reflect the high quality of the work pupils do. There are many examples of display, which helps and supports pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and the governing body take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. There is regular and effective training for all staff and governors to ensure that they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You, as designated safeguarding lead, have

strong links with outside agencies. Your records of engagement with these agencies are detailed and show your meticulous approach to this aspect of the school's work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow safeguarding issues through effectively.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Children settle well into their Reception Year because the early years leader establishes clear and open links with parents. Communication between home and school is good. There is also clear and detailed communication between the school's Reception Year team and local nursery providers. This means that children get off to a flying start at school. They are happy and safe and increasingly independent and yet aware of others.
- Children explore a wide range of activities and are well prepared for Year 1. For example, in a number of activities the teacher used deft questioning to encourage the children to explore which pine cones and dinosaurs were lighter or heavier than others. This lead activity was then expertly extended in the outdoors area by a teaching assistant who reinforced the mathematical language modelled by the teacher. Children's progress and success is carefully recorded and then used in planning to extend and focus teaching next time.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength. The proportion of pupils who achieve the standard in the Year 1 screening check on phonics has been consistently above average over the last three years. The new school-wide focus on reading is having an impact in key stage 1. The most able pupils in this key stage said that they enjoy reading and discussing the ways the writer uses words and patterns of words to create effects for the reader. The least able pupils in key stage 1 are able to use their phonics skills to read new words correctly.
- Most pupils make good progress through key stage 1 from their starting points. You ensure that staff monitor the progress of pupils carefully and use the information they gather to focus their teaching. You do this through regular visits to classrooms and meetings with staff to discuss pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching across all subjects continues to improve. In addition, pupils are taking more responsibility for their own learning as they move through key stage 1. For example, there is clear evidence that pupils are editing and improving their own writing as they respond to staff comments.
- Unconfirmed reading outcomes in 2016 at the end of key stage 2 were not as good as those in other subjects. You and your team are addressing this and it is clear that the actions you are taking are having an impact and reading is improving rapidly. Inspection evidence supports this. For example, across the school, staff are helping pupils see the link between developing their own writing skills and the skills and devices that pupils see professional writers use in the books they are reading as a class. In an upper key stage 2 lesson, the teacher expertly used focused questioning to help pupils explore how word choice and astute use of adjectives can change meaning in writing and have an impact on

the reader. The pupils responded with real enthusiasm to this and relished the opportunity to discuss the relative impact of words like 'bedraggled' and 'ill-fitting' in a piece of text from their reader.

- The number of disadvantaged pupils at the school is much lower than the national average. Their books and the school's own information show that the majority of this group of pupils are making good progress in reading and mathematics. However, their progress in writing is not in line with that of their peers and is not yet consistently good enough.
- The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least expected progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the coordinator for this aspect of the school's work ensures that staff are carefully and well trained and aware of the needs of these pupils. The school works carefully with outside agencies, including the local authority, to ensure these pupils receive appropriate support.
- Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school. Their parents agree. Pupils behave well and relish being challenged in their learning. I saw no examples of low-level disruption. They are polite, enthusiastic and aware of the needs of others. They feel that they are part of a caring community. They sang with real enjoyment and engagement in an assembly at the end of the day. Overall attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils told me that they are safe, felt safe and know how to stay safe. They told me that there is regular training at school that helps them keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. They said that they knew about and were alert to the range of forms that bullying can take and what to do if it happened to them or to a friend. They said that they would tell an adult and that they were very confident that adults at the school would deal with any bullying promptly and well.
- Governors know the school well and hold you to account. This is because you supply them with high-quality information about the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching. They supplement and check this through their own direct engagement with the school. Governors visit the school regularly and are increasingly linked to subjects. Governors are aware of the relative shortcomings in reading and clear about how successfully you and your team are addressing them. They are also aware of the ways in which you are broadening leadership at the school to ensure continued progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review the impact of the initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes and delight in reading by the end of January 2017 and regularly after that
- leadership capacity continues to grow through focused opportunities for staff to develop and extend their skills as leaders of their subject or area.

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

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I focused on the following lines of enquiry during the inspection:

- Is safeguarding effective?
- Does the provision in the Reception class enable children to make good progress from their starting points?
- Are pupils making better progress in reading?
- Does the curriculum, especially for mathematics in key stage 2, meet the needs of all pupils from their starting points?
- Is the provision for the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational and/or disabilities good?
- Is leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness accurate and based on robust evidence?

I met with groups of parents at the beginning of the day. I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness and what you had done since your recent appointment to ensure the school continues to improve. I also met with your two assistant headteachers, the early years leader, five governors, including the vice chair of governors, and with the coordinator of the school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

I read a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked information about pupils' achievement along with external evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

I considered 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own records of monitoring parental views. I visited all classes, most of them accompanied by you, to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked pupils' progress in their books, talked formally with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and talked informally with pupils in lessons and around the school at lunchtime and playtime.

I enjoyed listening to and discussing reading with pupils from Years 2 and 5. I attended an assembly at the end of the day.