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Mrs Katie Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Smith

### **Short inspection of Thornton-in-Craven Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 November 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Despite being in post for only three years, you have made significant changes and these have had a positive impact. You have provided determined, dedicated and astute leadership. Governors, staff and parents all hold you in high regard and describe you as integral to the continued success of the school. Staff morale is high and all teachers feel valued and work hard as a team to provide well for the pupils. Pupils and staff have a special relationship and it was great to see them playing hopscotch together at the start of the day! Teachers are proud of their village school and, because of this, have created a lively, stimulating environment where everyone's view is valued. All the parents I spoke to were wholeheartedly in support of the school and were effusive in their praise. One told me: 'Provision is fantastic – you never see a miserable child here!' These views were reinforced in Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. One parent wrote: 'This school has a wonderful family atmosphere. My child is extremely happy coming to school and talks enthusiastically about what they have done. Staff are very approachable and know my child extremely well. Communication is excellent and the school is led with dedication.'

Like staff and parents, pupils are also proud of their school. All pupils who spoke to me during the inspection day were keen to describe the friendly, caring ethos and said they would recommend it to a friend.

Your detailed self-evaluation summary paints an accurate picture of the school and clearly identifies the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Areas in the school development plan are being tackled with rigour. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Attainment was particularly strong at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, where results were significantly higher than the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Indeed, all pupils reached or exceeded the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, placing the school in the top 1% of primary schools in England. The quality of writing seen in both key stage 2 classes was impressive.

Areas for improvement highlighted in your last inspection have been tackled with rigour. Your very able mathematics leader has introduced teaching programmes that prioritise problem-solving and pupils are now more confident when using their number skills. The school's assessment policy is effectively applied and your methods of support have improved pupils' attitudes and enjoyment in lessons. Teaching of mathematics is effective across the school and is regularly monitored by you, the mathematics leader and colleagues from the Castle Alliance group of schools as part of a peer review. Results at both the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2017 were impressive and reflect the effort that has been made to improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics.

Leadership and management are strong. In the three years since your appointment, you have restructured staffing, ensuring that all classes are taught effectively. With your support, a recently qualified teacher is now in post as an effective early years leader. Provision for this area of the school is improving rapidly. You also work closely with the mathematics and literacy leaders to set targets and review progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

As the designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all records are of high quality and meticulously kept. Together with the office manager, you ensure that all checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. Teachers and governors attend regular child protection training.

Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school and always feel safe. All described behaviour as good and were keen to explain the rewards system. When asked about bullying, one pupil remarked, 'No – never happens!' Another continued, 'We all try to be respectful to one another,' and the others agreed with this. Pupils talked confidently about internet safety and were able to give me clear instructions about staying safe online. Recent visits from a police youth officer and the road safety hippo have provided advice on e-safety and road safety for pupils and their parents. All of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire felt that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry related to the provision for children in the early years. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of

development was lower than the national average. In addition, the proportion of boys achieving a good level over the past three years was significantly lower than that of girls. In the past year, the new early years leader has improved provision considerably. Her dedication and vision has led to the construction of a new outdoor area, with many opportunities for children to develop physical, social, communicative, literacy and numeracy skills. Some areas are designed specifically to appeal to boys. During my visit, three boys had set up a 'motor cross bike repair shop' and were able to describe confidently to me what they were doing. The introduction of the 'rainbow challenge' has linked independent learning to focused activities and this ensures that reading, writing and number tasks are always part of children's independent learning daily routine. Parental involvement has been increased through 'stay and play' sessions with a focus on phonics and number. Children who need help are quickly identified and teaching assistants provide effective 'catch-up' support. Pupil profile portfolios provide an accurate record of learning. Assessment information indicates that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development will be significantly higher in 2018 than in 2017.

- Another key line of enquiry focused on attainment in writing in key stage 1. This is because in the last two years, the percentages of pupils achieving the expected standard and the higher standard have been lower than the national averages. It is appreciated that in small cohorts, such as yours, one child can make a considerable difference in terms of percentage. The literacy leader has implemented several strategies, including increased moderation of writing, sharing good practice, targeting extra support for some pupils and providing precise guidance to pupils. The 'rainbow challenge' in Reception is already having a positive impact on boys' writing. Writing books in key stage 1 show that progress is being made, but as yet there is not a high enough level of consistency. You have ensured that there is now a greater focus on improving handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Your intention is that this will help a larger proportion of pupils to achieve their potential.
- Although results in the 2017 key stage 2 assessments were very high, a small number of pupils in Year 6 did not make the progress expected from the standard they reached at the end of their Year 2. This affected the overall progress results for the school, which were average when compared to the national average. You are resolute in wanting every pupil to make the maximum progress that their ability allows. With this in mind, a 'greater depth' club has been established for pupils working just below, or at, the higher standard. The small number of pupils eligible for support through the government's additional funding are being supported well.
- You have established a curriculum that is engaging, relevant and meets the needs of the pupils well. Pupils with whom I met were keen to tell me about all their 'fun' learning activities. A recent science week was a favourite. Pupils explained that they carried out a crime scene investigation and made water-pressure rockets and erupting volcanoes. In addition, a number of parents visited to talk about their jobs, which linked well to pupils' learning. Visits are used well to enhance the curriculum, two favourites being a trip to the Houses of Parliament to learn about democracy and a residential visit to Malham to find

fossils. In some year groups, opportunities are taken to extend pupils' knowledge of other cultures. In one lesson we visited, pupils had been reading 'Journey to Jo'burg', the story of a South African family struggling against apartheid. Pupils demonstrated strong empathic skills and produced some wonderful writing. Opportunities to develop cultural awareness in other curriculum areas are, however, sometimes missed.

- Overall, pupils' reading is strong and this is reflected in results at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Guided reading takes place daily and all classes have class libraries. Almost all pupils who did not meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in the last two years can now read fluently.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision for children in early years continues to improve in order that the proportion achieving a good level of development meets or exceeds the national average.
- strategies to improve the teaching of writing continue to be implemented, so that more pupils achieve the expected standard and the higher standard at the end of key stage 1
- opportunities are created to extend pupils' knowledge of other cultures.

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

Richard Knowles  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I looked specifically at safeguarding, early years provision, pupils' achievement in writing in key stage 1, progress in key stage 2 and the wider curriculum.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your office manager, the early years leader, the subject leader for English and members of the governing body. I also had a meeting with your school adviser. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data, performance management records and visit notes from a recent local authority review. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 29 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with three groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed

safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. The third group described the wider curriculum and showed me examples of work from a range of subject areas. You and I visited all classes together and observed teaching and learning in writing and mathematics. We also visited a phonics session for Year 1 pupils. At the end of the morning, we spent time in the early years unit to view areas of provision. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' written work and topic work from most year groups. I also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online surveys of pupil and staff views.