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Mr Steven Viles  
Headteacher  
Kirkstall St Stephen's Church of England Primary School  
Morris Lane  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Viles

### **Short inspection of Kirkstall St Stephen's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 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 lead the school with resolve and a real sense of moral purpose. You are determined that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, get the very best. You are ambitious for all learners and seek to remove barriers to their learning and well-being. You have developed leadership at all levels in the school. Staff morale is high.

You know your community well and respond to its needs. Your openness and availability were commented on very positively by many of the parents with whom I spoke and who commented via the internet during the inspection. The strong, open, relationships, which you and your staff have with parents have had a positive effect on improving overall attendance at the school, which is now above the national average. However, a small minority of pupils are still absent persistently. You have tackled this energetically through the range of increasingly effective strategies employed by expert and tenacious school staff. You balance understanding for the needs of families and parents with a firm, unwavering view that pupils must attend school regularly if they are to learn and be safe. As a result, although still too high, incidents of persistent absence are reducing.

You were taken aback by the disappointing provisional reading scores in the end-of-key-stage-2 tests in 2018. You moved promptly and effectively to address the issues that contributed to these results. Working with the whole staff, you have redoubled your efforts to embed skills in reading across the school. I saw examples of this. I

heard Year 5 pupils discussing their reading using appropriate vocabulary and with real enthusiasm. They were well versed, for example, in understanding the differences between retrieving information from text and the ways that writers use inference to develop narrative or to make their point. They showed real delight in the magic of language and the ways it is used to affect mood and attitude. Similarly, in the Reception class, I saw engaged children and expert adults deploying their skills. The children were enthralled by their learning and fully involved, using both sound and actions to develop their vocabulary and read new words. You have been tenacious in addressing the issues that led to the disappointing results. You have galvanised and heartened your staff and drawn on external expertise and support from, for example, the local authority and the diocese to help you in your pursuit of success.

You have developed a broad and interesting curriculum at the school. It enables pupils to experience a wide range of activities that extend and deepen their knowledge and develop their skills. You and the governors share a firm view that pupils must have a broad education that prepares them well not only for their next steps in education but also to be thoughtful, reflective and engaged citizens at ease with themselves and each other. The school's taught curriculum is underpinned by a very wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. It also takes full account of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as the importance of developing healthy approaches to eating and care of their bodies. School meals, cooked on site, are, according to the pupils, tasty and inviting. I saw a lot of broccoli being eaten at lunchtime.

The school's previous inspection in November 2014 identified the need to strengthen the effectiveness of leaders, particularly in relation to planning and checking the effect of the school's actions. You have addressed this effectively, although you are aware that there are still some areas that need further attention. You have ensured that all staff develop their skills and you have encouraged them to use their initiative, harnessing their enthusiasm and desire to improve the quality of education the school offers. As a result, staff feel engaged and involved in the school's drive to improve further. Working with you, they check the effect of their work in class regularly. Staff meetings focus very firmly on pupils' progress and achievement, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Overall, the school's plans reflect this focus. These plans are ambitious, clear and detailed. However, it is not consistently set out who is responsible for key tasks and how precisely success will be measured. The role of governors in this checking is also not clear.

Middle leaders are a developing strength of the school. Subject leaders are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and eager to improve. They feel fully supported by you to do the job that you ask of them. They work closely with staff to develop and extend subject knowledge. They also monitor pupils' progress through visits to classrooms, scrutiny of workbooks and conversations with pupils about their progress and attitudes to learning. Middle leaders' links with governors are developing. However, governors do not regularly receive subject-specific information about pupils' progress from subject leads.

Governors know the school and the community it serves well. They are realistic about the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve it further. There are developing links between governors and particular areas, subjects and projects at the school. Through these links, governors are increasingly gaining clear insights into the work of the school and their effect on pupils' learning and well-being. These insights, combined with very effective support from the local authority and the diocese, are ensuring that governors' actions to continue to improve the school are effective. Governors regularly undertake learning walks and talk with pupils to gain additional insights and further evidence to support their views of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously kept, regularly updated and are of high quality.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You have very strong links with outside agencies. The records of your dealings with these agencies are detailed. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

### **Inspection findings**

- Early years is very well led. Children enter this area of the school with skills and experience similar to those normally expected for their age. Because of the very thorough actions of the leader and her team, children quickly settle into school and thrive in an exciting environment that is rich in language and interesting experiences. They are safe and well behaved and learn how to get on together. Appropriate school routines are quickly established and relationships among the children and between adults and children are marked by kindness, openness and generosity. The phonics programme is well taught. Parents are encouraged to play a very active role in their children's learning. They welcome and appreciate this.
- Phonics is well taught. I saw examples of the teacher and teaching assistants teaching phonics with confident assurance, developing children's skills and moving promptly and effectively to address misconceptions. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been similar to national averages over the last three years. Although still developing, the school-wide focus on reading is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to books and reading in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been improving across the last three years. Unvalidated outcomes for summer 2018's assessments in all three subjects suggest that they will be above the 2017 national average.
- You have responded promptly and effectively to the disappointing outcomes in

reading in the 2018 key stage 2 tests. You planned for improvement carefully and you have monitored the effect of the school's actions meticulously, seeking external support to confirm judgements. There are clear signs that your planned actions are having a positive impact on both pupils' skills in and attitudes to reading. Reading now has a much higher profile in the school. Pupils told me that they have noticed and welcome this.

- Staff demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They know their pupils well, especially the disadvantaged, and they use the information they gather about pupils' progress to plan work that stimulates, supports and engages them. I saw examples of staff showing their expertise in the use of questioning to extend and deepen pupils' thinking, often at a fast-moving pace. I saw staff using a combination of kindness and persistence to stretch pupils' understanding by asking questions that enquire about 'why' and 'how' rather than the more mundane 'what'.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works very effectively with staff and governors to monitor the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. She helps staff develop their skills through regular training sessions. Additional funding is spent wisely. Staff expectations for these pupils are generally high. Their progress is monitored very carefully. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Communications with parents are good.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subject areas and then using what they see in their colleagues' classrooms to develop staff skills and deepen knowledge. As a result, pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum. Middle leaders also meet regularly with colleagues from other schools to develop their own skills and help assure the accuracy of their judgements about teaching quality and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the school. Communication between teachers and their assistants is regular and detailed. Teaching assistants show high levels of skill. For example, I saw an assistant in a key stage 2 class thoughtfully and yet insistently using questioning to develop and deepen the thinking of a group of most-able pupils.
- Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school. Overall attendance is above the national average. The minority of families whose children are persistently absent are supported in a range of humane, yet forthright, ways. Home visits are promptly arranged and ways forward and appropriate support agreed with parents and carers. As a result, persistent absence is reducing.
- Pupils are kind and aware of the needs of others. They are keen to do well. They are well behaved in class and around the school. I saw no examples of pupils behaving inappropriately in lessons. There is a culture of care and mutual respect across the school. The school's own records of behaviour support the view that poor behaviour is rare. When it does occur, the school is careful and appropriate in its support of pupils and their families. Pupils who, from time to time, find boundaries difficult and are helped to see the benefits of good behaviour.
- Pupils told me that they are safe, felt safe and know how to stay safe. They said

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.

- Parents are very satisfied with the service the school offers. They spoke with enthusiasm about the care that the school takes to keep them informed of their children's progress and well-being. They also spoke positively about the availability of staff. As one parent wrote, 'Staff are approachable and responsive to our queries. The school generates creative ideas and activities for the children, and overall is run very well.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the development of skills in, and love of, reading continues to be a high priority across the school with a particular emphasis on further developing staff's skills and so that all pupils can access the full, rich curriculum the school offers
- they continue to develop the roles of middle leaders so that they play the fullest part in developing staff's skills, including those of teaching assistants, so that all pupils of all abilities make strong progress and achieve as they should
- they continue to fine tune the plans for improving the school's performance by making clear how progress will be checked and by whom.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes to observe learning and, where appropriate, talk with pupils about their work and experience of school. I was accompanied by you or by you and your deputy in all of these visits. I scrutinised a range of pupils' books and folders of work. I spoke with you and members of the leadership team, including the leader of early years and of English, mathematics and science. I also spoke with governors, the SENCo, a colleague from the Church of England Diocese of Leeds and an officer of Leeds local authority school's service. I spoke on the telephone with

another colleague from the Church of England Diocese of Leeds. I also spoke on the telephone with the chair of the governing body. I observed and spoke informally with pupils at the start and end of the day and during break and lunchtime. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I met with eight Year 5 pupils formally to discuss their views of the school. I also listened to and discussed reading with five Year 3 pupils. I considered the 44 text messages from parents and the views of the 47 parents who responded to Ofsted's online facility, Parent View. I read a range of documents about the school's progress, safeguarding systems, monitoring, staff training, attendance and governors' work.

I was shadowed on this inspection by Ofsted inspector Janet Sheriff.