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Miss Carrie Green
Vice-Principal
Rawthorpe St James CofE (VC) Infant and Nursery School
Rawthorpe Lane
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Miss Green

Short inspection of Rawthorpe St James CofE (VC) Infant and Nursery School.

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 April 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your senior leadership team are highly ambitious for pupils and staff. Your strong commitment to and passion for improving the quality of education for all groups of pupils shines through. You do not shy away from tackling shortcomings and take swift action to address any underperformance. For example, a series of innovative strategies have been put in place to support families who are more reluctant to send their children to school on a regular basis. As a result, although still slightly below the national average, attendance is improving quickly.

Your school has a welcome feel for visitors. You, the governors and your staff team foster well the Christian values that lie at the heart of this Church of England School. It became very clear to me during my visit that your school has a real family atmosphere with a nurturing and caring ethos.

You and your senior leaders have the full backing and respect of staff at all levels. As a result of your encouragement and support, staff feel nurtured and empowered to develop their roles in education. They told me that they are very proud to work at this school and typically commented, 'I come into school with a smile on my face every day'.

You and your staff value and respect the uniqueness of each child. This is exemplified clearly by the good progress that pupils in the resource-based provision

make, taking into consideration their very diverse needs. The learning environment is inviting and resources are of good quality. Relationships at all levels are respectful and pupils' behaviour in school is exemplary.

I was very impressed by how keen pupils were to learn. During a group discussion, pupils talked to me avidly about their 'amazing teachers'. They described in detail the wonderful range of after-school clubs and trips that are available to enrich their experiences. As members of the school council, pupils take an active part in decision-making within the school. It was very obvious to me that pupils are proud of their school. They talked to me confidently about the school's values of 'love', 'trust', 'respect' and 'compassion' and what they mean to them on a personal basis.

Parents hold you and all your staff in the highest regard. They described the transition arrangements that you have in place when pupils start school and when they move on to the junior school as 'seamless'. The emotional support offered by you and your staff to families in times of difficulty is greatly appreciated. Parents find teachers approachable and value the workshops that you provide to help them support their children's learning at home.

Leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' progress is now closely monitored and data is analysed regularly to identify any pupils that are underachieving or are capable of achieving more. Marking is effective and celebrates pupils' achievements and identifies the next steps in their learning. Pupils now have a wide range of opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. Grouping pupils by ability for phonics (the sounds that letters make) has been instrumental in raising standards, particularly for the most able, in reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that your staff are well trained in safeguarding. This includes the most recent issues of national concern relating to radicalisation, extremism and child sexual exploitation. From my discussions with staff, it is clear that they have a good awareness of the different forms of abuse and are alert to the indicators that might suggest that a child may be being harmed. They understand that anyone can make a safeguarding referral and are aware of the different roles of children's services and the designated officer within the local authority. All safeguarding documents are fit for purpose and the case files I reviewed contained all the required detail. The single central record is compliant and those responsible for safeguarding and recruitment have completed training at the appropriate level.

Pupils whom I met during my visit told me that they felt safe in school. They have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it can cause. Pupils told me that, at times, bullying does occur, but staff soon sort it out. E-safety is well promoted and pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe when on the computer.

Inspection findings

- You are relentless in your pursuit of excellence and no stone is left unturned to ensure that each pupil achieves their full potential. Self-evaluation is accurate and you have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve further. These priorities are clearly set out in the detailed school development plan and are linked to teachers' targets.
- You and your other senior leaders keep a watchful eye on the quality of teaching. Through formal observations, book scrutinies and learning walks you have acquired a good understanding of each teacher's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers appreciate the advice given. However, we both agree that teachers, following observations of their lessons, are not given clear enough feedback on how their teaching impacts on the progress that groups of pupils are making.
- All staff have access to good-quality training which helps keep their teaching skills fresh and up to date. Some staff also have the opportunities to visit different schools in the locality to learn from other teachers. However, there is no systematic approach for staff to observe best practice within the school.
- In early years, from their different starting points, children make strong gains in their learning, and the number of children achieving a good level of development is rising. This ensures that a greater number of children than previously are ready for the transition into Year 1.
- The number of children who have English as an additional language is high. Some children have their baseline assessments carried out in their home language but this is not the case for all. However, you, I and the local authority adviser agree that this is an area the school should address to ensure an accurate comparison with other children.
- Teachers strive to make lessons fun and all groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress and achieve well. This was highlighted during our learning walk. We observed Reception children writing sentences and using their phonics knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. Younger children giggled with delight as they used magnifying glasses to search for snails, ants and spiders in a glass tank. Teachers skilfully extended their learning by asking them to consider which insect was the smallest and largest. Pupils in Year 1 were absorbed in an exciting practical activity which developed their awareness of compound words, while Year 2 pupils were writing complex sentences using adjectives.
- Collaborative working is a real strength of your school. There are clear lines of accountability with all schools in the federation. The infant and junior schools work hand-in-hand to ensure excellent continuity in pupils' learning.
- The pupil premium money is used to good effect to support disadvantaged pupils academically, socially and emotionally. The school's tracking systems

show that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school often perform as well as, and sometimes better than, their classmates.

- A snappy slogan highlights the creativity of the new curriculum. It is affectionately known as the 'CLICK curriculum'. You and pupils explained to me that this acronym means 'creative learning inspires clever kids'. This new curriculum is now embedded well and does inspire children to learn.
- Working with the junior school and high school, foundation subject leaders have devised their own system to monitor and track pupils' progress as they move through the different schools in the federation.
- The school website is bright, informative and easy to navigate. However, it does not meet current guidelines with regard to the information that should be published. The special educational needs report does not evaluate the effectiveness of the provision the school provides. Furthermore, the report does not detail the arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities about the provision made at the school.
- In addition to grouping pupils for phonics, pupils are also taught in ability groups for mathematics in Year 1 and Year 2. This ensures that the needs of all pupils are met, including the most able.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- baseline assessments are always carried out in pupils' home language
- feedback from lesson observations is more sharply focused on the progress of groups of pupils
- systematic procedures are implemented to share best practice within the school
- the website is compliant with the Department for Education's requirements and is checked regularly to ensure that it remains so.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders and two members of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents, staff and pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's development plan and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaires completed by parents, pupils and staff.