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Mr Ian Yapp
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Dear Mr Yapp

Short inspection of Tadcaster, Riverside Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the deputy headteacher provide strong leadership, have a clear vision for excellence and are well supported by middle leaders. You have an accurate and honest view of the school through your careful and organised approach to pupils' assessments, as well as the regular checks leaders make on the quality of teaching. You have identified the right priorities for improvement and have well-organised plans for how these actions will be carried out. Leaders are responsive to the changing needs of the school. They consider the recruitment and organisation of staff and governors carefully, to ensure that the team has the right skills and knowledge to continue to take the school forward.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because of the exciting opportunities they have across the curriculum. This learning includes well-planned activities that help pupils develop a strong moral and social understanding. Pupils speak highly of the staff and how they are helped to keep safe and given extra support with their work if they need it. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. The vast majority of parents and carers are very positive about the education and care their children receive. They particularly value the effective methods of communication the school has with them.

Leaders have continually refined the school assessment system to ensure that it gives them up-to-date and accurate information. They have an excellent understanding of which children are working at the expected standard for their age

and which are not. Using these assessments and timely observations of learning, leaders quickly identify any aspects of teaching or pupils' performance that are less than good. You work closely with other leaders and staff to make sure that resulting plans for improvement are briskly actioned. Effective feedback to teachers includes identified actions they should take to help pupils improve. You and middle leaders agree that adding more thorough checks on pupils' work across the year will further improve this understanding. You agree that it will give a more complete picture of where pupils are doing well or needing more support and direction. It will also help leaders check how successfully teachers are implementing leaders' actions for improvement.

During the last inspection, teachers were directed to improve the support and guidance they give to the most able pupils. The 2017 provisional key stage 1 results, the school's assessment information and pupils' work show the success of the school's work in this area. The proportion of pupils reaching higher standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was above the national average in reading and writing and mathematics. Leaders have supported staff with training and work with other schools to ensure that there is a good understanding of the demands of the higher standards in the national curriculum.

The direction for the most able writers in the last inspection was more specific. You were asked to make sure that they had more opportunities to work independently. In addition, you were directed to ensure that teachers had higher expectations of the most able pupils in writing, so that pupils could write more expressively in a wider range of writing styles. Teachers' and teaching assistants' direction in helping the most able pupils edit and improve their writing skills has resulted in improvements in the proportion of pupils reaching a higher standard. The 2017 provisional end of key stage 2 results, pupils' work and school assessment information confirm this.

The lead teacher for English is relatively new to her post, but has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing. Leaders' direction can be seen in how pupils are becoming more successful at refining and editing their own work, though this is not yet consistent across school. Teachers are starting to have much clearer expectations of what rules pupils must always apply to each piece of work, in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Leaders agree that the direction they give to teachers in how to support pupils in improving these skills needs to be more explicit, with consistently high expectations. In reading, it is particularly the lower-ability pupils who need more precise guidance about how to improve.

Making better use of the outdoor learning area in the early years to support children's skills across the curriculum was also identified for improvement at the last inspection. Strong leadership and teaching in the early years has contributed to considerable improvements in this area. The outdoor learning spaces for Nursery and Reception children are inviting. Adults plan learning opportunities well to develop children's skills across the curriculum. Adults' assessments give them a very good understanding of the next steps each child needs to take, and they plan

different indoor and outdoor activities accordingly. Children are well guided and supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make strong progress. Learning is carefully recorded so that each child's progress can be seen and contributed to, by staff and parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. School leaders, governors and the local authority make regular checks on the safety of pupils and refine systems further accordingly.

School leaders' work with a number of external agencies is successful in ensuring that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Leaders are confident to talk to other agencies across the authority about how provision and systems can be further developed and improved. Records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils say that all staff would help them if they had a worry or a problem. School leaders have employed staff specifically to work with vulnerable pupils and their families, recognising the growing need for this support.

Pupils are clear about how they are taught to keep safe. They say that adults in school help, but that keeping each other safe is everyone's responsibility. Pupils know that the school's work around keeping safe and healthy will support them through school and into their adult lives.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to check on the quality of teaching in phonics and reading, as this has fluctuated since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy reading, and generally have many opportunities to read throughout the week, at school and at home. They speak with animation about class texts they are studying this term, such as 'Letters From The Lighthouse' and 'The Hodgeheg'. Year 1 phonics results have climbed steadily to the national average over the past two years. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading in 2017 at the end of key stage 2 has dipped. You agree that across the school the teachers should be more explicit in directing reading activities, particularly for the lower-ability pupils.
- The second focus for my visit was the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. There has been some variability in the progress disadvantaged pupils have made in the past. You and your team have been thorough in finding out the needs of these pupils and any potential barriers they may have to their learning. Many of these pupils are your 'spotlight' pupils. This successful strategy has heightened the profile of pupils who may be underperforming with leaders and teachers. Additional support is carefully put in place and checked. As a result, these pupils are making stronger progress.
- I also looked at the quality of teaching in mathematics and the effect on pupils' outcomes. Leaders and staff were disappointed with the 2017 provisional end of key stage 2 mathematics results. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected

standard in mathematics is lower than the existing national average. Results at higher levels are lower than those seen nationally last year. Pupils did not make rapid enough progress throughout their time in key stage 2. However, you and your team have thoroughly analysed the aspects of the test that pupils found most difficult and immediately put plans for improvement into action. Leaders have rightly identified that pupils did not have enough practice in applying their mathematical skills to problems and giving reasons for their answers. Pupils' work this term shows rigour in the way teachers are challenging pupils to test out how well they can apply their skills. Teachers are balancing this work well, with a continued focus on developing pupils' fluency in using mathematical operations.

- In your focus on improving standards in English and mathematics, you maintain a determined vision to promote learning across a rich curriculum. Pupils were very keen to tell me about the exciting places they have visited and the lessons they have in music and physical education. There are numerous clubs running through lunchtime and after school, which cater for a wide variety of interests. Several pupils enthusiastically described a history club activity where, with support of pupils from the grammar school, they had the chance to lead and build an imaginary army as they won tasks. Pupils and staff speak about their pride in the awards the school has received, such as the Gold School Games Mark and the numerous Eco Schools re-accreditations.
- Governors make sure that they keep up to date with the demands of their role. They are confident to seek external information and validation about the way they support and challenge school leaders. Governors explain how they have recently changed the frequency and focus of their meetings. They say that this is helping all governors have a much better-informed view of all aspects of school life. School leaders and governors have a positive, open partnership. Governors are extremely supportive, but rightly persistent in their challenge and questioning when any aspects of school performance are not strong enough. They value and benefit from opportunities for shared work, ideas and training through the Sherburn, Tadcaster and Rural (STAR) Teaching School Alliance.
- You are keen to work with others to deepen your own school improvement work, as well as sharing your own areas of strength. Leaders, staff and governors talk about the excellent partnerships within the STAR alliance. They say that this group of schools work effectively together, offering support, sharing resources and researching best practice. Your links with the local authority are similarly positive. The school improvement adviser has a good understanding of the school and of particular strengths within the leadership. You seek their guidance to further improve your own work. For example, you are working closely with the local authority to further develop the teaching of mathematics within the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- checks on teaching and learning are strengthened by placing a greater emphasis on studying the quality of pupils' recorded work over time, particularly in key stage 2

- plans to improve reading are further refined, with precise direction and high expectations of how to support lower-ability pupils in understanding the texts they read
- recent plans to improve pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics continue to be actioned and their impact checked to ensure that more pupils reach the expected standard.

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

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spent time in lessons and looking at pupils' work alongside you and the deputy headteacher. You presented your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. We looked at the areas you have identified for improvement and the success of the actions you and your team have taken. I met with school leaders and staff, pupils, representatives from the governing body and the local authority school improvement adviser. I spent time speaking with you, your staff, governors and the pupils about safeguarding practices. I studied a range of documentation, including that relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information and safeguarding. I spoke with parents after school and considered the 148 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.