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Mrs Alison Tweddle
Headteacher
Gillamoor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Tweddle

Short inspection of Gillamoor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 July 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Yours is a happy, friendly school where every pupil is an individual and you know them all. You have shown great determination to improve standards but circumstances since your last inspection have presented a considerable challenge. Frequent changes in staffing in the early years and key stage 1 have affected provision. In addition, a considerable number of pupils have joined the school in the past two years, meaning that the school has increased in size by one third. A number of these pupils have negative experiences of school, emotional issues and gaps in their learning. All have settled in well and gained in confidence due to the caring and supportive environment that the school offers. All of those that I spoke to were eager to tell me how happy they feel in this school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Pupils are proud of their school and all were keen to describe the fantastic opportunities that they have here. Pupils from key stage 2 told me about their annual residential visits to Edinburgh and Bewerly Park and how these were 'equally amazing'. Younger pupils were keen to tell me about their forest schools work. You also provide pupils with the opportunity to attend a wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs. They all said that they would recommend the school to a friend.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and this is evident in the comments to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. As one parent wrote:

'The school has consistently provided a supportive and engaging atmosphere that has encouraged my child to grow. He consistently achieves or exceeds his targets and the school has promoted his self-confidence.'

Parents who I spoke with informally at the beginning of the day were keen to praise the school. One remarked: 'I have no concerns. It's a good all-round school. The children are happy, well cared for and have every opportunity to sample different experiences.' Another, who had recently moved her children to the school, was keen to tell me about the 'amazing provision for children with special needs and emotional issues'. Many talked of the sense of community and the hard work of the staff, who they describe as always being approachable.

Your school self-evaluation summary paints an accurate picture of the school and the school development plan describes how you will secure further improvement.

You and your staff have tackled the areas for improvement highlighted in your last inspection with some success. A new mathematics scheme has been introduced, with an emphasis on practical work. This has helped pupils to develop competence when using the four rules of number, and their problem-solving skills have improved. A consistency of approach in terms of feedback is evident and pupils are given clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work. In your last inspection, you were also asked to improve the quality of provision for children in the early years. A new outdoor classroom area has been created and new equipment purchased. The early years leader was keen to explain that she had recently received a grant to further upgrade the outside area and the positive effect that this will have on the development of physical, social and communication skills. Another area highlighted in your last report related to provision and challenge for the most able. Although some progress has been made, there is still much to do to ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are challenged, with the result that a greater proportion of them reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding leader, you have a comprehensive knowledge of those pupils who are at risk and you have forged close partnerships with outside agencies and parents. Your administrative leader has ensured that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that all records are of high quality and meticulously kept. All checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. Safeguarding training is a priority and, during the past year, most staff and governors have been involved in child protection, the 'Prevent' duty and e-safety training.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and pupils say that bullying does not happen but, if it did, they would tell an adult immediately. Pupils are supportive of each other and they all play well together, regardless of age or gender. Pupils understand some of

the dangers related to the use of the internet and were able to explain what to do to stay safe when online. During my visit, pupils from Years 5 and 6 were receiving 'bikeability' training.

The views of the pupils were reinforced by their parents. Indeed, all of those who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire strongly agreed that their child felt safe and was well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry concerned the standards of attainment reached by the most able pupils in key stage 1. Over the past four years, few pupils have reached the higher standard in mathematics and no pupils have reached the higher standard in writing. Therefore, I wanted to know what actions are being taken to raise standards. The key stage 1 leader has a clear vision of what needs to be done to challenge the most able pupils in the early years and in key stage 1. She was able to explain how there is a greater focus on raising attainment. Pupils have developed greater confidence and have improved their number and problem-solving skills. In reading, teachers have worked on improving pupils' comprehension skills and answering questions with a greater emphasis on inference. In writing, there has been a focused approach on developing new ideas, using more adventurous vocabulary and improving pupils' use of punctuation. Pupils are now offered engaging and exciting texts and these are used to promote good-quality writing. They are increasingly being given the opportunity to write at greater length and they are beginning to edit and improve their work. During my visit, I observed Year 1 and Reception children writing letters to the teacher explaining why they were late for school. The children demonstrated great imagination and were engrossed in the task. With sustained concentration, many were able to complete their letters.
- Next, I focused on the early years. Much work has been done to raise the standards of attainment reached in the early years. There has been a focus on improving writing. Inside the classroom and in the outside learning areas, children are given reasons to write. At the beginning of the year, mark-making was a focus. More recently, staff have focused on improving fine motor skills so that children write reasonably neatly. Much work has been done to improve phonics and this is having a positive effect on reading and writing. Individual learning plans are now in place for each child. In 2019, most children reached the standard expected for their age in reading and writing and half exceeded it. Parents are now more involved in school. They attend phonics meetings and 'stay and play' sessions, with the result that they are increasingly able to support learning at home.
- My third line of enquiry focused on the standard of attainment reached and the progress made by pupils in phonics. Much work has been done by staff to improve pupils' attainment in phonics. This has resulted in all Year 1 pupils in 2019 achieving the required standard in the phonics screening check. Pupils show great enthusiasm in their phonics work and were able to talk knowledgeably to me about digraphs and split digraphs. I also listened to two older pupils, who had not achieved the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, read.

Both read fluently and accurately and were able to use decoding skills to sound out words.

- You have done much to monitor attendance and are eager that the national figure for pupils' attendance is reached. The school is thorough in its approach to ensuring that all children attend. All absences are followed up and parents are quickly contacted if their child is absent. The proportion of overall absence is influenced heavily by the fact that yours is a small school and every pupil's absence has a marked effect on the school's overall attendance figure. You are well aware of this and have worked hard to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils. In 2018/19, overall attendance has improved and is currently just marginally below the 2018 national average, at 95.95%.
- Another line of enquiry involved looking at the wider curriculum and how pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum is met. This was a particular concern as all early years and key stage 1 children are in one class and key stage 2 in another. Despite the isolated location of your school, pupils enjoy frequent visits out of school and this greatly enhances the curriculum. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the breadth of their curriculum and the exciting topics, visits and clubs – all of which are celebrated on the school's website.
- Pupils' writing needs to be developed further. Standards across key stages 1 and 2 are inconsistent and many pupils are not at age-related standards. My scrutiny of pupils' work in books suggests that much work needs to be done to improve writing. Handwriting legibility and general presentation are also an issue. The assessment of pupils' writing is, in many cases, overoptimistic and I have asked the school's local authority adviser if pupils' writing could be formally moderated in 2020.
- Reading is an area of strength. A culture for reading has been established and pupils talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. When I listened to pupils read, they did so with fluency and demonstrated very good comprehension skills. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and do so on a regular basis. Reading progress is recorded in individual reading journals. The strength in reading is reflected in the standard of attainment reached and progress made at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Most pupils are working at least at the standard expected for their age.
- The chair of governors and the governing body have a comprehensive knowledge of the school and a good mix of skills. They make regular visits and are knowledgeable about safeguarding, finance and attainment data. Governors are passionate about the school and were able to describe accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in the management of the school and provide strong support and challenge in equal measure. Governors are working hard to ensure that the school is sustainable and have been proactive in securing future leadership arrangements following your imminent retirement. They are determined that the school continues to provide an effective education for pupils in the local community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- through high-quality teaching, there is an increased challenge for pupils in key stage 1 and this is reflected in a greater proportion reaching the higher standard
- pupils' writing is accurately assessed so that learning activities are closely matched to pupils' needs
- the teaching of writing is improved across key stages 1 and 2 so that pupils make good or better progress
- all pupils develop a neat handwriting style and there is a focus on improving the presentation of work in exercise books and files
- there is a continued focus on raising attainment in the early years, with clearly identified next steps for children on their learning journey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of York, 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, attendance, attainment and progress in the early years and key stage 1, challenge for the most able pupils and how you provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the key stage 1/leader of English, your school administrator, the local authority adviser, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data, a safeguarding audit and a recent review. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered the 29 responses to 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 discussed extra-curricular opportunities. You and I visited both classes and observed phonics in early years/key stage 1 and mathematics in key stage 2. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of the

written work and topic work of a range of pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys of pupils' or staff's views.