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Mrs Rowena Sykes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Sykes

### **Short inspection of Pickhill Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 September 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since September, you have tackled your role with a calm yet passionate approach. Any potential disruption that may have 'rocked the boat' during this year's close collaboration with a local primary school has been avoided. You have worked effectively between the two schools and have skilfully paved the way towards the impending federation. Your determined leadership has also brought about improvements to teaching and learning. Well supported by the governing body, you have rigorously addressed any issues of underperformance or weakness, and have brought together a skilled and enthusiastic school team. You have identified the strengths and current priorities for the school accurately. You detail further actions to address these priorities in the school development plan, monitoring the effect these actions are having in improving teaching and learning for pupils.

You have ensured that the areas for improvement raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully. You have invested in training and support to enhance the professional expertise of staff, especially in the teaching of mathematics. You have also allowed the leader of mathematics to take a firm grasp of her subject. She has blossomed in this role, and is, in a large part, responsible for the substantial improvements made in this historically weaker area for the school. Improvements have resulted in a rise in both pupils' attainment, and the pace of their progress. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved forward to successfully address issues in the quality of reading and writing. You are also constantly reviewing and refining the quality of provision in the wider curriculum in

subjects other than English and mathematics. You acknowledge that further work is needed in the assessment of pupils' progress in these subjects. Plans are in place to address this issue, and to improve the outdoor learning environment for early years children.

The co-chair of the governing body stated that the school 'puts the pupils at the heart of everything'. This is patently the case. Pupils are a credit to the school and themselves. They display exemplary attitudes to learning, clearly motivated to always do their very best, simply because they want to be successful. They are kind, caring and tolerant of each other. They show great pride in their well-ordered and attractive school, enhanced by high-quality displays. During my visit, the key stage 2 children sang with gusto in preparation for their end-of-year show. Pupils show a strong sense of responsibility and independence, exemplified by their knowledge of the '3 Bs' if they need help with work – 'brain, buddy, board' before asking the teacher. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They proudly explained their interaction and money-raising exploits for partner schools in India and Ghana. Parents appear to be in full agreement, one stating that their 'child's potential is being realised and supported'. Another said, 'we feel lucky' to be part of this 'fantastic small school'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have undertaken the role of designated safeguarding lead effectively. All policies, procedures and records are of high quality and are up to date. Your comprehensive annual report on safeguarding children, produced for governors in May, lists a range of recent safeguarding initiatives, including staff training and governor and staff induction.

There are no records of any incident of bullying, and pupils categorically state that no bullying happens at Pickhill. Pupils say that they feel safe. Their behaviour is excellent. Regular fire drills recently paid off, as pupils told me they knew exactly what to do when fumes from clay models in the oven set off the fire alarm. They have regular teaching on good behaviour, bullying and e-safety, and, as a result, pupils are knowledgeable in these areas. Pupils know the dangers of social media and understand that they should never post personal details online. They have full trust in their teachers and teaching assistants who look after them and report feeling safe all of the time.

The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the inclusive, friendly school community is very evident. The school promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development very well, and pupils show high levels of respect for each other, their school and their local community.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have been resolute in your determination to improve the quality of teaching, which, in turn, has allowed pupils to be successful learners. During your year in post, pupils' achievement has improved in every regard and in all year groups.

Pupils are continuing to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Although pupil numbers are very small, nearly all pupils are reaching standards of attainment expected for their age in each year group.

- Children get off to a good start in their learning in early years. Adults are skilled in supporting children's learning. They use effective questioning and provide a range of activities to develop children's writing and understanding of number. Most children begin the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress in early years so the proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of the year is broadly average.
- Reception children play and learn happily alongside each other and their classmates from key stage 1. They stick at tasks and maintain their concentration well, especially indoors. Opportunities to explore, investigate and engage in creative play in the outdoor environment are currently very limited. You acknowledge that although lack of space is an issue, this area of provision still requires substantial and urgent improvement.
- From work seen in books and scrutiny of the school's assessment systems, an increasing proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth in their learning, including in mathematics. As a result of sterling work completed by the mathematics leader, you have been successful in your quest to develop pupils' skills in mathematical problem-solving and reasoning, with many examples seen in books. There is a good balance in the teaching of different aspects within the mathematics curriculum. There is also a sensible emphasis on consolidating pupils' fluency in basic number and calculation, as well as times tables.
- Investment to provide pupils with practical apparatus is enabling them to see patterns in number and gain a deeper understanding of place value. Teachers plan creatively to provide 'real life' contexts for mathematics. Older pupils, in the key stage 2 class, were captivated by finding percentages of amounts as they converted galleons, sickles and knuts to spend in Harry Potter's Diagon Alley, into pounds. The most able pupils are consistently challenged and stretched, such as Year 6 pupils finding more complex amounts such as 57% of £10.60.
- You ensure that pupils benefit from consistently high-quality teaching. Relationships are respectful and strong between adults and pupils. Skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, supporting pupils' learning well. Expectations of pupils are high, and as a result, their work ethic is very strong. The quality and quantity of work they produce is impressive. Pupils accurately use and understand a range of punctuation in their writing. They are assisted by their use of 'sound effects' for each different punctuation mark when they read out a piece of their work. Teachers' subject knowledge underpins pupils' good progress in writing. Year 3 pupils worked hard to generate complex sentences, about Harry Potter, using subordinating conjunctions and clauses. Older pupils accurately used semicolons to separate items in a list.
- The school has worked hard to develop and deliver an exciting, broad and rich curriculum, covering all national curriculum objectives. Pupils are clearly engaged and excited by their topic work. They eagerly recounted aspects of their topic on

the Romans, eating Roman food and dressing in togas. Pupils enjoyed their topic on the Arctic, making models and visiting a ski centre, as well as acting out parts of the story of 'Treasure Island' as part of their work on pirates. You acknowledge that the assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills, in all subjects across the curriculum, is not currently in place. As a result, it is not possible to track their progress across the whole of the curriculum, or to address gaps in their knowledge.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of the early years outdoor learning environment matches that found indoors
- systems to accurately assess and track the progress of pupils are extended to all creative and foundation subjects.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Leeds (Church of England), 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

Philip Scott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, and the other teachers in the school. I held a meeting with two governors, including the co-chair of the governing body, the school administrator and met with a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons in each key stage and reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school, and listened to two pupils from Year 1 read. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised pupils' achievement in the 2016 and 2017 statutory assessments. I reviewed a number of comments made by parents and carers using the 'free-text' facility. There were insufficient responses to generate results on Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. In addition, I reviewed the two responses to the staff questionnaire and scrutinised the school's website.