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Mr Joe Mitchell
Head of School
Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant and Nursery School
Orchard Head Lane
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Short inspection of Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since taking up post in January 2019, you have wasted no time in identifying what is working well in the school and what needs to improve further. You recognise the frequent changes in staffing have had a negative impact on pupils' standards since the previous inspection. Since September 2018, five new teachers and an assistant headteacher have started at the school. You recognise that strategies to improve the school are at an early stage of development and have had little time to become embedded and have a positive effect. You and your team work closely together and show determination to improve the school and address areas of underperformance. Your self-evaluation accurately identifies that outcomes, over time, have not been good enough by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Following the last inspection, pupils' progress in key stage 2, in the core subjects of reading and mathematics, has declined considerably. You have instilled a shared ambition and enthusiasm among staff and governors for the school to get back on track and improve further. You have won the full support of your staff. Teachers and teaching assistants share your vision and buy into the raised expectations. They are receptive to the feedback provided by leaders' monitoring to improve the quality of their teaching.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the overall quality of pupils' writing by improving pupils' correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are using punctuation more accurately in their writing. While pupils' presentation is improving, particularly at key stage 2, more work is needed. This is particularly important to ensure that pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils in key stage 1, are supported in forming their letters correctly in their writing.

Most parents are buoyed by the recent changes in leadership. They have a positive view of the school. Many say their children are happy and enjoy coming to school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their view that they enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen and eager to share their views about what they enjoy the most at school. Pupils say that the school motto of 'Value, Respect and Appreciate Everyone' helps guide them to 'Treat everyone equally and to treat others how you would like to be treated.'

Governors are keen and fully committed to the school. Governors and members of the trust are united in their ambition to ensure that the school continues to improve. However, the work of governors is at an early stage. The trust is developing a new structure going forward. This new structure is intending to use the collective expertise from your school and another school and ensure that their skills are shared across the trust. However, this aspect is at a very early stage and remains untested. It is too soon to measure the extent to which these measures are contributing to school development.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are highly vigilant in making sure that pupils are kept safe. Staff receive a wide range of training, which ensures that they are appropriately trained so that they can act should they have any concerns about a child.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are firmly established. Leaders and governors, involved in appointing staff, are well trained in safer recruitment. Leaders ensure that employment checks on adults are thorough and ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You have created helpful display boards that provide timely advice for pupils should they have any concerns. Pupils know that it is the adults' job in school to make sure that everyone is safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe and everyone cares for one another in school. Parents and pupils agree that behaviour in and around school is good. Pupils know help is always available should they have any worries or concerns. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to be safe in a range of situations, including when they are online. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to understand how to keep safe and develop their personal safety skills. Pupils have a mature understanding of bullying through their work on anti-bullying. Pupils learn about the different forms of bullying and why it is wrong to bully other people. They say occurrences of bullying are rare and are dealt with firmly and fairly should they occur.

Inspection findings

- Since taking up the post of head of school, you and your team have focused on improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. You have quickly identified that pupils' progress in reading and mathematics across key stage 2 has been too low over time. In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress declined at the end of key stage 2. As a result, progress in reading was well below average and mathematics was below average. Too few pupils, particularly middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils, reached the standards they are capable of. Furthermore, phonics outcomes by the end of Year 1 have been inconsistent over time and were below average in 2018. These weaknesses exist because of frequent changes in staffing and inconsistency in teaching, learning and assessment over time. You and your leaders have channelled energies into improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by raising the bar and having higher expectations for what pupils can achieve.
- You and your leaders have sharp priorities to improve pupils' presentation, progress and their work rate. This is bearing fruit and helping pupils to become more independent and produce better standards of work. Pupils, particularly the most able, now have increased opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems, such as calculating percentage increase and decreases. As a school, and as a trust, you have plans to launch a new reading strategy aimed at improving the teaching of reading and pupils' engagement in reading. The new strategy is at a very early stage of development so it is too soon to measure the effectiveness of this on pupils' outcomes. Even so, you acknowledge that more work is needed to ensure that your raised expectations are firmly embedded. You correctly identify that more pupils need to achieve the standards they are capable of by the end of key stage 2.
- The results of the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 have varied over time. In 2018, they declined to be below the national average. You have made the teaching of phonics a matter of priority this year. Your work in this area has helped to establish a more consistent and coherent approach to the teaching of phonics. Your English and early years teams have provided support for staff to improve the quality of their teaching. The teaching of phonics is characterised by developing pupils' knowledge of the sounds letters make through a multi-sensory approach. Teachers are becoming more consistent in their approach to teaching phonics and this is helping pupils to develop their reading and writing skills. Even so, more work is needed to ensure that the teaching of phonics becomes more consistent and systematic. This is important to help pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, draw on a range of strategies to tackle unknown words when reading.
- Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils as a matter of priority. You know that considerable improvement is needed for these pupils' progress to match more closely other pupils nationally. In 2017 and 2018, the proportions of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics were much lower than the national averages at key stages 1 and 2. Current pupils are beginning to catch up with other pupils in the school because of teachers' raised expectations. You have an external review planned to help you

improve provision for these pupils. However, more disadvantaged pupils need to make greater progress in order to diminish the difference between them and other pupils nationally by the end of key stages 1 and 2.

- You are committed to creating a curriculum that is varied and which enhances pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy rich experiences of visits and visitors into school. A footballer and a doctor visited the school to inspire work on people who help us. You have a set of clear expectations for a wide range of subjects for teachers to plan from so that pupils acquire knowledge and skills equally well in a range of subjects.
- You and your team have given pupils' attendance the highest priority this year. Over time, pupils' attendance has dipped to be slightly below the national average. Holidays taken during term time had a significant impact on school attendance figures last year. Leaders regularly reinforce the importance of good attendance to parents through newsletters. You have introduced a system that rewards the highest-attending pupils, and for the highest-attending class, on a weekly and half-termly basis. Your tenacity in this area is paying some dividends. Overall attendance has continued to rise steadily this year and is much closer to the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still too low and is below that of other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in teaching, learning and assessment are secured to enable more pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils, to reach the standards they are capable of across key stages 1 and 2, especially in reading and mathematics
- disadvantaged pupils make greater progress across key stages 1 and 2 to diminish the differences in achievement between these pupils and other pupils nationally
- the teaching of phonics improves, so that at least the large majority of pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, consistently meet the expected standard by the end of Year 1
- pupils, especially lower-ability pupils, are supported to form their letters correctly when writing
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves to at least average so that they benefit more fully from school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Stillings
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders as well as members of your governing body and members of the multi-academy trust. Together, we visited a range of classes and discussed these observations. I scrutinised books, spoke to pupils about their learning and listened to them read. A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding checks, attendance information and documentation relating to pupils' progress and achievement. I took into account 55 responses to the Parent View online survey and 40 responses on parent free-text. In addition, I met with a group of teachers and teaching assistants to discuss their views about the school.