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Mr Jonathan Briggs  
Headteacher  
North and South Cowton Community Primary School  
North Cowton  
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Dear Mr Briggs

### **Short inspection of North and South Cowton Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 February 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. With the able support and commitment of your governors, you have continued to drive further improvements. You have embedded a culture where pupils have access to high-quality learning experiences, flourish as individuals, and are consequently very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Over time, outcomes have remained consistently strong at the end of each key stage. While you acknowledge that there are still some areas to develop even further, your realistic self-evaluation means there is a relentless drive for improvement and a continued determination to succeed.

Challenging the most able pupils was an area for improvement which was identified at the previous inspection. In the last few years, by the end of key stage 2 the proportion of high-attaining pupils has been consistently in line with or above the national average. There has also been an increasing proportion of pupils exceeding the early learning goals by the end of Reception in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in key stage 2 in 2016 was in line with the national average, you were disappointed that a greater proportion did not reach the higher standard. Your immediate response has been to identify inference in reading and reasoning in mathematics as areas where teachers could challenge pupils even further. This focus is already resulting in effective challenge for current pupils, as evidenced in lessons and in pupils' books.

The range of partnerships you have formed are used very effectively to support continual school improvement. You are conscious that this strategy for professional development is instrumental to the school's future success, particularly given its very small size. Leaders and teachers have already benefited enormously from gathering expertise, sharing good practice, and receiving and providing training and support. You have rightly identified the need to exploit these opportunities even further in order to continue improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and therefore improving outcomes for pupils.

Governors are well placed to support the school and shape its strategic direction. They are very knowledgeable and have the appropriate skills to provide a high level of challenge. Additionally, leadership support through the local authority and other networks provides external validation of your school's self-evaluation. Consequently, you are able to report to the governors with robust and reliable information about the school's successes and areas for development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have created a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Safeguarding is a high priority for staff and governors and you make sure it is always on the agenda at meetings. Staff are clear about safeguarding procedures as a result of the regular training and updates they receive.

Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school and parents strongly agree. The curriculum provides opportunities to support children in being safe. Consequently, pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe online and what they would do if someone was being unkind to them at school. Pupils are incredibly supportive of each other, demonstrated by the caring attitudes shown when they cooperated together in a mixed-age group. Their very high attendance, which is well above the national average, is testament to their enjoyment of school and the value they see in their education.

### **Inspection findings**

- You know the school well because of the checks you carry out on the quality of teaching and learning. Effective systems enable you to gather a range of evidence about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the school improvement plan shows a clear and accurate understanding of the next priorities for development. You also use appraisal to hold staff effectively to account and support the drive for continual improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- You are currently developing an assessment information system. This is starting to become more robust and increasingly accurate as you are making comparisons with other schools and networks. However, some of the progress measures used lack ambition and could prevent some pupils from being targeted to reach the higher standards they are capable of. You agree and are keen to review this so that expectations are very high for all pupils. The new tracking system is enabling leaders and teachers to identify any group or individuals who are not making as

much progress as you would expect. This earlier identification means that you are able to respond quickly and work with teachers to plan how to address any gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers are using the assessment information to accurately plan activities which more precisely meet pupils' individual needs.

- I was interested to see how teachers are supporting the group of pupils who did not meet the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 to catch up with their peers. You were able to evidence how these pupils, most of whom had special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making strong progress through the tailored support they are receiving. Teachers are very aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. They use this knowledge to plan their next steps effectively and to group pupils accordingly to provide the support they need to help them catch up.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the end of Year 1 phonics check has been increasing over the last three years. In 2016, phonics outcomes were in line with the national average. As a result of training and development in the teaching of phonics, current provision is meeting pupils' needs well. School assessment information shows that an even greater proportion of current Year 1 pupils are on track to meet the standard this year and the improving trend is set to continue.
- Pupils enjoy the challenge they receive in lessons and they demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning. Their books show how they regularly self-assess their work against the teacher's criteria. This supports them in knowing what features to include to reach even higher standards. Therefore, pupils have high expectations of themselves and are taking greater responsibility for their own development as learners.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been good evidence of successful staff development. Teachers have received significant development opportunities such as supporting new members of staff, taking on leadership of curriculum subjects and working in partnership with other schools. As a result, leadership capacity has increased and other staff, in addition to yourself, are able to take responsibility for key areas. You are aware that this remains a priority for the school in response to staffing changes and to support the development of new staff.
- Subject leaders have made changes to the curriculum, which has improved it even further. Pupils say they enjoy their learning. They like the links which teachers make between the subjects because it gives them a chance to practise the skills they have been learning. Homework is also used to good effect. High-quality, creative activities challenge and motivate pupils as well as providing an opportunity for parents to be involved in what their children are learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- professional development remains a priority so that all staff continue to receive high-quality training and support through partnerships and from each other, in order to continue to improve outcomes for pupils.

- the assessment system is modified to enable a more ambitious measure of pupils' progress.

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

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, both teachers, five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated documentation including: the school improvement plan; information about pupils' progress; governing body minutes; attendance and behaviour records; and information about safeguarding. I spoke with a range of parents and carers and considered responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We visited both classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and we spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work.