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Mrs Sarah Gillam
Headteacher
Pickering Community Infant School
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Dear Mrs Gillam

Short inspection of Pickering Community Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 April 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors managed cover arrangements for your recent maternity absence seamlessly, and the high quality of the acting headteacher's leadership ensured that the school continued to improve in your absence.

You have established an ambitious culture for developing all staff. Governors find creative ways to retain the expert skills of exceptional leaders by supporting career development opportunities. For example, leaders' work with a local research school has helped to change the way they plan the curriculum. Continuing professional development has been transformed. Staff really appreciate the improved professional development opportunities they are now given. Leaders carefully evaluate research evidence that shows the most effective ways to have the highest impact. Research evidence underpins the decisions that leaders make about curriculum design and delivery.

Leaders at all levels share your vision for improvement that is relentless in its pursuit of excellence. Middle leaders passionately describe the continuing professional development opportunities they are given. Staff feel valued and supported. They say that leaders take full account of the need to keep workload manageable. The culture of respect embodied in the school's strapline 'learning, caring, sharing' extends to staff as well as pupils. One member of staff said: 'This is a strength of the school since the last Ofsted.' Another member of staff said: 'Senior leaders are constantly looking at ways to support us with workload and listen to opinions regarding well-being.'

Parents and carers are very happy with the school. They say teachers give them lots of ideas to help them support their children's learning. One parent said: 'The staff make a significant effort to offer every opportunity for parents and carers to become more involved with the children's learning and school life.'

In the last inspection, you were challenged to improve the teaching of phonics in Year 1. Inspectors also asked you to give pupils more opportunities to develop their problem-solving and investigative skills in mathematics. You have made many changes to address these weaknesses and you have been successful. Results did not improve in the 2018 phonics screening test, but pupils' current work shows that pupils are making good or better progress now.

Safeguarding is effective.

- The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are trained well. They are alert to the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm.
- The governing body has plans to ensure that at least one governor has safer recruitment training. Senior leaders already have this training, and they make all the necessary checks when recruiting staff.
- Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe online. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there is no bullying. All safety and welfare requirements in Nursery and Reception are met. Some parents would like children to be encouraged to drink water more frequently.
- Leaders work very closely with local authority officers, and the teacher in charge of the local enhanced mainstream school, to make sure that pupils who have additional social, emotional and mental health needs are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders say that children's good personal, social and emotional development is very important. They say that research evidence has found that this helps children grow up to be successful adults. For this reason, leaders place a strong emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum in Nursery and Reception.
- Parents appreciate the balance achieved by leaders. One parent said: 'Both my children thrive at this school. The teachers are dedicated to a high level of learning, not only academically but socially and emotionally too.'
- I observed children in Reception working well together, showing respect for each other and taking turns. Adults help children develop self-care skills and resilience, and this is building children's self-esteem and confidence. This means that children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders have improved the quality of phonics teaching in Year 1 since the last inspection. Pupils know their letters and sounds. Pupils are very well supported by their parents who hear their children read frequently at home. Pupils' reading books are well matched to their phonics skills and knowledge. This means that

pupils are making good progress, gaining fluency and confidence as early readers.

- There have been significant improvements to the teaching of mathematics since the last inspection. Leaders have been trained at the local mathematics hub and they have changed the way mathematics is taught as a result. Pupils have made strong progress in their reasoning skills since these new teaching methods have been introduced.
- For example, in the lesson observations we did together, we witnessed learning conversations between Year 2 pupils who were explaining their mathematical thinking to each other. Pupils were discussing whether two images of a person turned through 90 degrees could be classed as a quarter turn, because they could not see a whole. They know that a fraction is part of a whole.
- Pupils' mathematical reasoning is impressive, and they confidently worked this problem through to achieve the right answer. The confidence Year 2 pupils are gaining as mathematicians is preparing them very well for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have developed 'steps to learning' in mathematics that are well understood by all staff. This means precision teaching can close any gaps in learning.
- Leaders have not identified these small steps in learning as thoroughly in all other curriculum areas. This means that the progress that pupils are making in other subjects is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics.
- As this is an infant school, I was also interested in evaluating how well the curriculum is preparing Year 2 pupils for the next stage of their education. Leaders have already established curriculum teams that include subject leaders from the junior school working alongside infant school colleagues. Leaders have taken this collaborative approach to ensure that pupils' progression across the curriculum can be planned in small steps from Nursery right through to Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the wider curriculum to ensure that the progression of pupils' knowledge and skills is planned as precisely as it is currently within core subjects.

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

Tracey Ralph
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection you and I observed lessons together in every class. Pupils' work in all year groups and in all subjects was scrutinised alongside senior leaders. Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the English and mathematics subject leaders, the school business manager and a group of four governors including the chair of the governing body.

Telephone interviews were held with the local authority school improvement adviser, the local authority behaviour and attendance officer and the teacher in charge of the local enhanced mainstream school.

Various documents were evaluated, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, governors' meeting minutes and the school's monitoring records. I also listened to several pupils read. Safeguarding documents were reviewed. The responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from 15 staff and 21 pupils were considered. The 28 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were also taken into account, along with comments made personally to me by several parents taking their children to school at the start of the day.