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8 February 2017

Mrs Sarah Parkinson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Parkinson

### **Short inspection of Adel Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 March 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well and from the outset of the inspection you demonstrated an honest and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas in need of further work. Your relentless drive for improvement is appreciated by your staff, who feel your infectious enthusiasm is a motivating force. They list strong teamwork as one of the strengths of the school. Your belief that there is an answer for every problem has enabled you to confidently take on the challenges facing you and find a solution. For example, when the private company running the before- and after-school club in school gave short notice of closure you set to and with the help of staff re-opened the club as a school provision. Parents told me how much this had meant to local families and how your action had ensured they could remain in employment.

You have built a strong and cohesive leadership team who have a wealth of experience. They know the school well and are more than capable of leading the school in your absence. This has enabled you to continue your work as an associate member of the local trust of schools and the Red Kite Teaching Alliance. Working in this way enables school leaders to remain outwardly focused and gain knowledge and experience from others outside the school's immediate locality.

Governors spoken to during the inspection respect and admire your work. They fully

support the changes which you have brought about and are clearly aware of the further development needed in school.

You recognise that the quality of school leadership also includes the work of middle leaders. This group includes the mathematics and English leaders as well as the early years leader. Some of this group are new to post; others have been in post for longer. However, as yet this tier of leadership is not making as strong a contribution as they could towards driving up standards in school. Further work is needed in order to ensure they are able to offer a good level of support to senior leaders and further accelerate the pace of school improvement.

Since your appointment almost three years ago you have worked tirelessly with your staff and leaders to bring about continuous improvement. Your disarming honesty and integrity has motivated staff. This has brought about a direct improvement in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, particularly in key stage 1.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection said how much they enjoyed school. Older pupils really appreciate the extra responsibility they are given as playground leaders. The caring attitudes they show in helping younger children demonstrate clearly their mature demeanour and well developed social skills. The new lottery award funded trim trail is, they feel, a great addition to the playground and although they had to form an orderly queue to use it, all told me it was worth the wait.

While attainment in some areas remained above national standards last year, you acknowledge that fewer pupils attained greater depth in their knowledge of reading in key stage 1 and writing in key stage 2. However, thanks to the very hard work of all staff, currently pupil progress in both key stages 1 and 2 indicates that pupils are on course to reach much higher standards this year.

Since the last inspection you have introduced a robust system for checking pupils' progress. The inclusion of pupils' starting points now gives a much more accurate picture of their expected progress. This has enabled you to ensure that targets set for pupils' future learning are sufficiently ambitious. As a leadership team you have been clearly and successfully focused on making sure the most able pupils are offered sufficient challenge so that they are able to learn to a greater depth. This greater level of challenge can clearly be seen in the writing in Year 6 pupils' books. In one piece in particular their writing showed great empathy, understanding and maturity when describing the experiences of young soldiers locked in battle in the second world war. Your focus on developing opportunities for pupils to learn at a greater depth is not just confined to key stage 2. Work in pupils' books in Year 2 demonstrates a high level of challenge.

Overall pupils make good progress in developing skills in phonics. However, the teaching of phonics skills does not always address the needs of all children and this slows progress across the school.

## **Safeguarding is effective**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You and other senior leaders have ensured that pupils have a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Governors are very clear about their responsibilities. The safeguarding governor visits regularly and has a good understanding of current safeguarding requirements.

The deputy headteacher delivers regular safeguarding updates to all staff and keeps well-organised records which ensure that staff training is updated consistently. The work of the learning mentor is appreciated by pupils and parents. Her focus on ensuring that pupils attend regularly has contributed to pupils' overall attendance rate, which is above the national average. Staff work closely with other agencies to support the needs of vulnerable pupils and confidential records are kept and stored appropriately.

The vast majority of pupils and their parents feel school is a safe and happy place.

## **Inspection findings**

- Children join Nursery and Reception with a broadly typical range of knowledge and skills. They make a good start overall and a higher than average proportion reach a good level of development as they enter Year 1. However, while they make good gains overall, the teaching of phonics is not always as effective as it could be. This reduces the level of challenge particularly for the most able children.
- Pupils in key stage 1 are currently making good progress in reading. A closer focus on developing reading skills is paying dividends and has accelerated the progress of all groups of pupils. Pupils' confidence in reading has also been improved through the school's development of critical reading skills. For instance, pupils are encouraged to understand and retrieve information from texts, interpret the meaning and then explain and comment on it to others. One pupil described this as 'helping me to understand things better when I read'.
- Key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing dipped last year, particularly for the most able pupils. Current school data shows that the school's very close focus on developing pupils' understanding to a greater depth, and improvements in the way punctuation, spelling and grammar are taught, have had an effect and pupils are now making accelerated progress. This is further evidenced by the good standard of work seen in pupils' books.
- The work of the learning mentor has ensured that pupils' attendance has remained above the national average. Her further work on supporting pupils' social emotional and mental health needs has enabled her to support pupils' health and well-being in a wide variety of areas. These include helping pupils to make a successful transition to secondary school, increasing their understanding of their feelings and increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders play a more active role in bringing about improvement, particularly within their subject areas
- the teaching of phonics in the early years foundation stage and in key stage one is more closely monitored to ensure that planned learning meets the needs of all children, including the most able.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I examined a range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, curriculum plans, and records kept on attendance and pupils' behaviour.

I also held meetings with staff, leaders and five governors, and met informally with 12 parents at the start of the school day. Accompanied by senior leaders I also observed learning in all classrooms and looked at the work in pupils' books.