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Mrs Nicola Manley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Manley

Short inspection of Airedale Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good.

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 your appointment as headteacher in April 2017, you have established a clear vision for the school that is one of continuous improvement. Staff share your vision for improvement. They are dedicated and committed to making this vision a reality. Staff feel well supported. Consequently, staff morale is high.

You know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. As a result, your improvement plan is focused on the key priorities for improvement. However, you acknowledge that the milestones, against which you judge progress, are not sharply linked to improvement in the pupils' outcomes you wish to see.

Since your appointment, you have raised expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. This permeates the school, from the purposeful displays for learning to the improvements in the quality of teaching. One member of staff said, 'The bar has shot up in the last 12 months and the pace has picked up rapidly.' However, although expectations have been raised, this is not embedded fully in pupils' outcomes. You are committed to developing pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. For example, during the inspection pupils were involved in a planetarium experience.

The introduction of a 'non-negotiables' school policy makes the raised expectations for presentation standards explicit. This is beginning to show some impact in the work in pupils' books. However, leaders acknowledge that this is not consistently applied in all lessons.

Pupils, and particularly children in the early years, have access to a rich range of learning experiences. The positive learning environment, with purposeful displays around all areas of the school, means that pupils learn in an engaging and creative environment. Pupils are happy. They told me that they enjoy coming to school. They talk about the different religions they have learned about in lessons. Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered to visitors. They generally behave well and are respectful to each other.

Governors, the chief executive officer and members of the trust are passionate about improving the school and outcomes for pupils. Governors and members of the trust are frank about what is going well and what needs to improve. However, governors do not hold leaders to account effectively enough. Governors do not evaluate pupils' achievement in detail to ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact on improving outcomes. However, there is no complacency. New governors are clear about how the governing body needs to develop its skills further to ensure that leaders are held to account more effectively.

The vast majority of parents and carers hold positive views about the school. Many parents told me that their children enjoy coming to school and are well supported. One parent said, 'Airedale Infant School is a happy school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff understand the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. Staff know the pupils and are responsive to their needs. Records of any incidents are detailed and include a clear chronology of actions taken.

As designated leader for safeguarding, you ensure that there are effective links with outside agencies to support pupils and their families. The parent support adviser knows the community well. Parenting workshops are well attended and have positive impact. Pupils' emotional needs are catered for through mentoring support from the parent support adviser and external agencies, where appropriate. Dedicated areas in classrooms encourage pupils to communicate how they feel.

Pupils told me that if there is any bullying it is dealt with by an adult quickly. The vast majority of parents, in response to the online parent survey, Parent View, noted that they believe that the school deals effectively with bullying. However, a small number of parents disagree. Behaviour incidents are logged, including follow-up actions. However, you acknowledge that systems to log bullying need further development. By the end of the inspection, you had already devised a more effective log of bullying incidents.

Inspection findings

- You have rightly made improving attendance a key priority this year. As a result, you have introduced a range of new strategies to reduce pupil absence. The increasing focus on attendance is beginning to show some impact. For example, there is a decline, so far this year, in the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school. Nonetheless, rates of absence and persistent absence are still higher than the national average.
- You place high importance on diminishing the difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils at Airedale Infant School and other pupils nationally. As a result, you commissioned a review of how the school uses its additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Your subsequent action plan incorporates the key recommendations from the review. Your revised plan clearly identifies the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils, which are shared with staff. However, disadvantaged pupils' rates of progress remain variable, particularly those of disadvantaged boys. You acknowledge that gaps are not diminishing quickly enough.
- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been below the national average for a number of years. As a result, you have focused on improving outcomes, particularly for boys. This is having some impact. You place high importance on developing children's reading skills from Nursery and early years. Consequently, school information shows that more pupils are on track to achieve the standard in the phonics screening check compared to previous years.
- The proportion of boys who achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 2 has been below the national average in the past, especially in writing and mathematics. As a result of more focused support and effective intervention, more boys are on track to achieve the expected standard this year. However, boys' presentation of the work in their books remains variable. During lesson visits, girls tended to dominate discussions. Boys are more passive and less willing to contribute. You are working with staff to ensure that boys are encouraged to contribute more frequently in class. Your plans to improve outcomes in mathematics are in the early stages of development. Thus, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of these plans.
- Children generally start school with skills below those typically expected for their age. In the past, by the time children left Reception class, fewer achieved a good level of development than the national average. School information shows that more children in the early years are on track to achieve a good level of development this year. This improvement is due to the high importance you have placed on developing a rich and creative learning environment, where children are encouraged to be independent and confident. The deputy headteacher, who leads early years, is passionate about ensuring that children get off to a 'good start'. Regular meetings between early years teachers and teachers in Year 1 ensure a smooth transition for children. However, you know there is more work to do to align the practices in the early years to those in Year 1 and Year 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance improves rapidly, and persistent absence declines, so that pupils' attendance is at least in line with the national average
- targets in the school development plan are linked more closely to pupils' learning and achievement at both the expected and higher standard
- pupils' progress accelerates in writing and mathematics, particularly that of low-attaining boys, so that more achieve the expected standard
- governors' skills are developed further to ensure that they hold leaders effectively to account
- all staff consistently apply the school policy for presentation of work
- the quality of phonics teaching is consistently strong so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 1.

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

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made visits to lessons with you. I also looked at the work in pupils' books with the deputy headteacher. I met with you, a number of staff and two governors. I also met with the chief executive officer, the director of school improvement for the trust and the primary consultant for the trust.

I took account of 27 responses from parents to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, 17 responses to the staff survey and 31 responses to the pupil survey. I met with a group of pupils from Years 1 and 2. I spoke to a number of parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I listened to some pupils from Years 1 and 2 read.

I examined a range of documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes, attendance and behaviour logs, attendance data and safeguarding records.