

28 March 2018

Mrs Lindsey Callaghan
Headteacher
Armley Primary School
Salisbury Terrace
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS12 2AY

Dear Mrs Callaghan

Short inspection of Armley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

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.**

Following the last inspection, the leadership team was asked to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order to raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics. In key stage 1, there was some improvement initially but, over the last two years, there has been a decline in attainment. Test scores for Year 6 pupils in 2015 and 2016 show that pupils achieved well compared with other pupils nationally and their progress was well above the national average. However, in 2017, attainment for key stage 2 pupils fell to well below that expected for their age. You were able to explain clearly the negative impact of high pupil mobility on attainment. In addition, the school has experienced a significant level of staff turnover. Both you and the deputy headteacher are in acting roles, while teachers in Years 1, 2 and 6 are new to post. Despite this, you have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and have already demonstrated a determination to succeed. Key members of staff have been moved to new year groups and a new senior leadership team has been established, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching.

The leadership team is clear about strategies to improve attainment. For example, the key stage 1 coordinator and assessment leader were able to describe the positive impact of staff training, intervention groups and moderation of pupils' work.

You identified improving pupils' behaviour as a priority and this has been done to great effect. Pupils are well behaved and respectful and work well with their peers. Pupils with whom I met described behaviour management systems that they said were clear and very effective. One said, 'Everyone is expected to be thoughtful and kind now', while another described the positive work of the school council and its efforts to make the school a 'happy place'. A small number of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues receive excellent support in the school's nurture unit. In short, you have created a pleasant, positive atmosphere across the school.

A supportive and well-informed governing body echoes your accurate view of the school. Governors can describe the strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement committee knows that improving phonics and reading must be a major focus and it is working with senior leaders to raise standards in these areas. The local authority adviser has been instrumental in arranging support from a national leader of education from a local school. This headteacher worked closely with senior leaders to evaluate teaching and to help implement performance management systems.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school and value the work of the teachers. Online Parent View comments praise recent staffing changes and improvements in behaviour. A grandparent of a child in the Reception class described to me the positive start her grandchild had made, saying, 'This school is brilliant and my grandson has settled in well – he gets fabulous support for his individual needs.'

Safeguarding is effective.

In an area of high social deprivation, senior leaders have established policies and practices that are effective and fit for purpose. The safeguarding records are appropriately detailed and of high quality, and all checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are in place. Leaders provide regular child protection training for teachers, teaching assistants and governors. All staff are vigilant and committed to keeping pupils safe and free from harm.

The attendance and child protection officer has a comprehensive knowledge of children at risk and has established strong and productive links with families and outside agencies. She monitors attendance assiduously and, due to her diligence, attendance is in line with the national average.

Pupils told me that they felt safe in school. All were able to talk knowledgeably about staying safe online, 'stranger danger' and staying safe when crossing roads. They have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it can cause. According to one child, bullying had been an issue 'a long time ago' but teachers now deal with any incident of bullying quickly and incidents are infrequent.

Parents spoken to all agreed that the school is a safe environment for their children. These views were reinforced on Parent View, where 100% of respondents agreed that their child felt safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at the teaching of phonics. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils who have achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has fallen steadily. This is affecting the progress pupils make in reading further up the school. You are presently in the process of carrying out an audit of the teaching of phonics and appreciate that effective teaching is the key to raising attainment. Staff are receiving training and are working with colleagues from your 'family' of schools. Targeted teaching is in place to support pupils with difficulties. Tracking carried out by senior leaders indicates that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check later this year.
- You and your senior leaders are aware that attainment of pupils in key stage 1 is of concern. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly lower than the national average. In the past year, new staff have been appointed and, although teaching is still not universally strong, improvements have been made. Senior leaders are closely monitoring teachers' planning, carrying out regular observations of teaching and moderating work. In-house training has been delivered to strengthen the teaching of reading and writing. However, the quality of written work seen in Year 2 was, in many cases, still some way from expected standards. You have worked hard to improve pupils' attitudes towards their learning and positive work habits were observed during the inspection.
- I also wanted to look at the teaching of reading. Leaders are aware that a reading culture has not yet been established. Presently, achievement in reading is significantly low in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. However, your records show that a higher proportion of current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet the expected standard and some are likely to achieve greater depth in reading at the end of key stage 2 this year. You are in the process of establishing additional library areas and the 'reading cloud' (an online resource to encourage reading) in order to raise the profile of reading. The teaching of reading is improving due to tighter planning, increased comprehension work and the addition of more stimulating class texts. Year 6 pupils who read to me were fluent, expressive readers, but this was not the case in other year groups.
- Additional government funding is being used well. A considerable sum has been used to establish a nurture unit that provides daily support for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues. Funding has also been used to employ staff for the breakfast club, an attendance officer and behaviour support workers. These staff have been successful in improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers ensure that outdoor provision for children in the early years affords good opportunities for physical and social development. However, opportunities for children to develop reading, writing and number skills outside of the classroom are limited.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is effective across the school in order that all pupils are supported and challenged and reach the standard of which they are capable
- the quality of the teaching of phonics is improved so that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is broadly in line with the national average
- the attainment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 improves to be at least in line with the national average
- a reading culture is established and the teaching of reading is improved so that this impacts positively on attainment in reading at key stages 1 and 2.

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

Richard Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I looked at behaviour, safeguarding, attainment and progress in reading and writing, and overall attainment at the end of the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, your school business manager, the safeguarding and child protection officer, the early years and key stage 1 leader, the assessment coordinator and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also had a meeting with your school's local authority representative. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, assessment data, minutes of governing body meetings and information about safeguarding and children at risk. I spoke with a parent at the end of the day and considered responses from the school's own online questionnaire for parents (there were only six responses to Ofsted's official online questionnaire, Parent View). I met with two groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding and behaviour with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. You and I visited most classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. During the afternoon, I revisited classes and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' written work from most year groups.