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Mrs Heather Edge
Headteacher
Ashfield Valley Primary School
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Dear Mrs Edge

Short inspection of Ashfield Valley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Having taken up the position of headteacher in September 2017, you have worked successfully to build trust and positive relationships with parents and carers, pupils, staff and governors. You swiftly ensured that leaders and staff gelled to form a cohesive staff team. Staff and governors alike praise your open, supportive and thoughtful leadership. Many staff came directly to me to praise the support that you have given them.

Your inclusive and open approach drives the school's work and characterises its ethos. This is evident in many ways, not least the high level of parental satisfaction and pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils said that they like and respect you, and parents and carers were immensely appreciative of your commitment to their children's education and welfare. The comment, 'I could not be happier with the school. I know if I had any problems I could come and talk to the headteacher and she would help me', reflected the views of many pupils.

Governors and staff wholeheartedly support the key priorities identified in your school development plan. This is based on your accurate school self-evaluation. Together with your staff and governors, you have identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school correctly. Staff and governors are committed and dedicated to providing the best possible education for pupils. The school development plan sets out the most important areas for development to bring about further improvement. However, you acknowledge that currently your development plans do not identify clearly enough who will check and who will

evaluate the impact of those actions. We agreed that the measures of success, by which you would judge the effectiveness of your improvement work, are not as clear as they could be to enable governors to monitor and evaluate critically the work of leaders.

Governors, however, are fully committed to school improvement. They take their roles in challenging and supporting the leaders of the school very seriously. You are rightly aware that they could be even more effective in their work if they were to extend the range of information that they use to find out how well the school is doing.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective steps to address the areas for improvement. The first of these was to ensure that teaching across the school was consistently good or better and that teachers matched work to pupils' needs effectively, in particular for the most able pupils. Since your appointment as headteacher, you have done much work to improve the quality of teaching, and there have been significant improvements. You have, for example, reorganised the English curriculum and sharpened the focus on reading across the school. Nevertheless, some of the most able pupils still do not reach the highest standards of which they are capable. You recognise that more pupils need to reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders were also asked to strengthen leadership and management by developing the role of subject leaders. In a very short period of time, you have developed enthusiastic and committed leaders throughout your school. You are supporting them well, and two of them are taking advantage of training programmes to develop their leadership skills. These leaders are taking greater responsibility for a range of improvements across all aspects of the school's work. You are continuing to develop your middle leaders so that they can be even more effective in their roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Leaders, governors and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

Staff are vigilant to any potential safeguarding issues and pass on any concerns. The governing body supports you effectively in your work to keep pupils safe. Governors ensure that safeguarding training is up to date. Referrals are made in a timely manner. You and your team are tenacious and ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They said that they understand the different types of bullying and that bullying is extremely rare in school. They told me that, if any bullying does happen, adults deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils described the many opportunities that they have to learn about how to keep safe inside and outside school. They said that the school regularly teaches them

about the dangers of social media and that they understand how to keep safe online.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' attainment in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1 was a key line of enquiry for the inspection. Not enough pupils achieved the expected standard in reading or writing in 2016 or in 2017. You are taking effective action to address this issue. Pupils are now on track to achieve well.
- Pupils who did not attain the expected standard in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1 have been well supported to catch up in Year 3. For example, a number of pupils who read to me used phonics very effectively to read unknown words. They read with fluency and expression, responding appropriately to a range of punctuation. Pupils explained their reading preferences and it is clear that these are taken into account in the thoughtfully chosen books available. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' love of reading. Pupils' writing across all year groups was of a high standard. You rightly remain focused on enabling more pupils to attain greater depth in their reading and writing.
- Not enough pupils in all year groups are developing the very highest mathematical skills. You have focused on developing across all classes a strong understanding of number and mental calculation skills. You agreed that leaders should build on the high-quality number work taking place across school to ensure that pupils are increasingly able to solve complex mathematical problems.
- Very few pupils attained the higher standard in reading or writing in Year 6 last year. Your tracking information and the work scrutiny we did together show that higher proportions of current Year 6 pupils are now on track to attain the level expected for their age in reading and writing. This is because of your continued focus on maintaining high-quality teaching and accurate teachers' assessment of pupils' learning in these subjects. You have rightly identified that a key priority for your school is to ensure that greater numbers of pupils now attain the higher standard in these subjects.
- I investigated how effectively the provision in the early years is accelerating the progress of all children so that more reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Your reorganisation of early years and its curriculum is starting to have a positive impact. Children in Nursery and Reception classes settle very well into school routines. Staff in the early years plan the curriculum around children's interests and it was clear to see from their learning journeys the steady progress that children are making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers sharpen the challenge for the most able pupils to enable them to make strong progress over time
- governors develop even further the rigour of their evaluation and the sources of

evidence which they use to hold leaders to account

- more pupils reach the highest standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Tonge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, a group of governors, staff and a representative from the local authority. I observed pupils around the school and in their classes. Together, we visited all the classes, observed teaching and learning, looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. I also met with four pupils to seek their views of the school. I listened to six pupils read. I met parents in the playground at the start of the school day. I took account of the four responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. This included four free-text responses. I also took account of the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.