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Mrs Louise Chappell
Principal
Grange Lane Infant Academy
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Dear Mrs Chappell

Short inspection of Grange Lane Infant Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have continued developing the school apace since the last inspection. All parents I spoke with during the inspection were very positive about the changes that have been put in place since the last inspection. You have focused your extremely effective leadership and management skills on responding swiftly to the recommendations, with a strong emphasis on reading, literacy and mathematics. You have strengthened the early years provision by moving the Nursery and Reception classes into the same area and enhanced their outdoor provision. Alongside opening the high-quality two-year-old provision, this means that children are more ready to start school. You have embarked upon a refurbishment of all teaching areas in key stage 1 to create a high-quality learning environment. You agreed that the outdoor area for the oldest pupils in key stage 1 now requires further development to increase the learning opportunities you provide.

You have the highest expectations and aspirations for all pupils and staff in the school. Your 'can't do yet' point of view and belief that every child can achieve no matter what their background permeates the school. This means that outcomes for

all pupils are improving year on year and more pupils are working at a greater depth than previously. Indeed, those who are disadvantaged are now doing better than other pupils nationally.

Staff feel valued and supported. They welcome the constructive comments made by you and continue to improve the quality of their teaching. You have created a highly knowledgeable and active middle leadership team delivering support to colleagues in their subject specialisms. Working alongside you and senior leaders, they fulfil their roles successfully. They are well informed about the delivery of their subject areas through observing, monitoring and, where needed, intervening to ensure high standards. They positively promote working with parents and network with other schools to promote good practice and share initiatives. They report the outcomes of their work to the advisory board on a regular basis and keep them up to date with any changes. Whether in terms of learning or physical and emotional well-being of all pupils, the message I received loud and clear from these leaders was, 'If we see a need, we act upon it!' You have successfully enabled staff to take responsibility for their areas and be accountable for every aspect.

You spend any additional funding wisely. For example, sports funding is used to develop sports skills and an impressive number of opportunities for after-school activities. Staff are benefiting too, as they learn new skills. However, you have thought deeper than this and, by working in partnership with physiotherapists, have used this funding to provide activities to develop those skills needed to improve other areas of pupils' development such as handwriting, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One parent who talked with me could not speak highly enough of the inclusive nature of the school and how every adaptation had been put in place to enable their child to access the full curriculum and make 'amazing progress'.

Governance is highly effective. The extremely knowledgeable academy advisory board members regularly visit the school, ask questions of the staff, observe sessions, undertake learning walks and receive detailed reports so they know exactly how well the school is doing. Oversight by the multi-academy trust is strong and effective through monthly challenge and support meetings with the executive board and additional professional challenge by other headteachers in the trust.

Pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard. Staff have high expectations and pupils know this. They readily follow instructions and know the routines in school. Emotional well-being is another priority for you. The support for pupils' emotional well-being is particularly strong and effective. You provide a range of activities and small-group work to enable pupils to talk about and understand their emotions. You develop their confidence and gain their trust so they feel able to approach members of staff should they feel stressed or have any worries. Pupils are confident and in all observations were never off task and were always learning. They work well with their friends and willingly share their ideas with each other. They are taught how to stay safe in different situations. Parents talk of how they feel their children are safe and happy in school. They say that all children are included and the school makes sure that all reasonable adaptations are made to enable equality of access to

provision. Pupils and staff deal effectively with the extremely rare instances of bullying or use of derogatory language. For example, in an isolated instance of racism, pupils were confident to speak up and say how they felt. They responded to the issue themselves by holding an assembly to promote 'Show racism the red card'. There have been no repeat incidents. Pupils have a good understanding of, and respect for, different families and cultural influences.

Parents are highly supportive. You and your staff have worked hard to develop and maintain strong relationships with parents. Parents talk enthusiastically about taking part in workshops to enable them to understand better how their children are learning. Those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, indicated that their children make at least good progress, are well looked after and are happy to come to school.

From the village walk or working with partners such as Doncaster Arts Centre, to the forest school and the Children's University, you have taken every opportunity to enhance the curriculum. You have extended the school day for the benefit of families and pupils with the before- and after-school clubs.

The three-year picture of pupils' progress is impressive. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years has risen from below average to average. In 2018, at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was average. In writing, this represented an improvement on outcomes in 2017. The proportion reaching the higher standards, however, was above average, and considerably so in mathematics and reading. These outcomes represent extremely strong and rapid progress from children's often-low starting points in the early years. Inspection evidence shows that standards of attainment across the school are continuing to rise. In phonics, for example, provisional data shows that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check has risen this year and is likely to be higher than last year's national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding meets requirements. The leadership team ensure that all safeguarding procedures are in place. There is a culture of safeguarding, from the caretaker undertaking daily risk assessments on site to pupils being taught how to stay safe and to feel confident to disclose any worries or concerns they may have. The academy advisory board inform themselves through audits, visits and discussions with pupils that this is so. Staff are fully up to date in training and receive regular briefings in staff meetings. Everyone sees safeguarding as a priority. As a member of the board stated, 'No concern is too small a concern.'

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked particularly at the teaching of writing. It is clear from pupils' workbooks that there is strong progress in writing across the school

and within year groups for all groups of pupils. Spelling for the oldest pupils is accurate and is phonically plausible. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. You have worked hard to ensure that this is the case. There is now consistency and continuity in approach by all teachers and staff. Pupils practise writing daily. Assessments are used effectively by staff to identify the next steps in development for each pupil. You and your senior management regularly monitor and assess pupils' work to ensure that there is no slowing of progress in this area. The success of this work means that progress and attainment in writing is now as strong as in other areas of the curriculum. Indeed, disadvantaged pupils now do better in this area than other pupils nationally.

- I reflected on how you foster high expectations and levels of challenge for pupils. Earlier, I referred to your ethos of 'can't do yet'. This is evidenced in lessons where teachers have consistently high expectations for all pupils. In every lesson we observed, there was a high level of challenge, from the Nursery through to Year 2. Pupils are consistently challenged to develop their thinking, reasoning and understanding. For example, in the teaching of mathematics across the school, pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and how to work through the challenges they are set. They can use a variety of methods to solve problems. Highly skilled staff across all age groups know exactly when to intervene to address misconceptions, or prompt further thinking, and when to step back and let pupils work things out for themselves. In the Nursery, we saw staff skilfully questioning children as to what tools they would need to plant a tree, and where would be the right area. Others were given problems of where to find the 'Golden Pants' using maps and clues. Staff use information they gather as to how well pupils are progressing alongside what parents tell them, to ensure that all pupils are making as much progress as they possibly can. This means that year on year more pupils than expected are reaching greater depth in national assessments by the end of Year 2.
- I observed strong progress in handwriting across the school. The focus you have had on this area of work is now paying dividends. Pupils' presentation of their work is of a high standard. It is always neat because pupils are proud of their work. Letter formation is developed over time, with most pupils in Year 2 consistently using a joined-up script by the time they leave. Exciting and extended writing opportunities now exist across the curriculum, for example constructing questions to ask the astronaut Neil Armstrong followed by an extended piece of writing about the journey to the moon. In another example, pupils constructed a recipe for making gingerbread biscuits. Through successful focused interventions for pupils with SEND, many are now writing at standards of attainment typical for their age.
- I considered how you foster the sharing of good practice across the school. You ensure that there is exceptional access to training opportunities and sharing good practice across the trust and the local authority. In-house training effectively led by yourself and your senior team complements this. Staff I spoke with all talked about the positive impact this is having on their practice. Your high-quality observations identify correctly their strengths and any areas for improvement. These are followed up so that teaching is continuously improving. This has led to three members of staff becoming lead moderators for the trust and the local

authority. Most staff have also delivered training for other schools, through visits, presentations and modelling good practice.

- I explored how effectively actions you have taken have improved attendance over time. I noted that you have put a great deal of time and effort into improving attendance, and this has paid off. Your current rate of attendance is in line with that seen in similar schools in 2018, and the absenteeism rate is below this. Persistent absence has dramatically reduced to below that seen in similar schools in 2018, and for many of these pupils there are understandable reasons for their absence, such as serious illness. Through the appointment of a parent support worker and partnership working with the education welfare officer appointed through the local pyramid of schools, you effectively work with parents to address any barriers to attendance that may present. You successfully help parents to be aware of how important school is and you constantly give encouraging messages. You have effectively involved the pupils themselves through awarding attendance certificates and class prizes.
- I noted how you and your early years team had worked successfully to develop the outdoor area for the youngest children to enhance skills and promote critical thinking. This means that children are able to practise and reinforce previous learning, so increasing their progress. This now needs to be replicated for the pupils in key stage 1 so that the full learning potential of the large school site is fully used to challenge their thinking and reinforce the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outdoor area for pupils in key stage 1 is further developed to better enhance and reinforce the high-quality teaching and learning in classrooms.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy advisory board and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Dorrity
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of the inspection was to affirm the standards identified at the previous inspection and to find out how well pupils and the school were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. We observed 10 sessions across all age groups. I considered a range of evidence, including the school development plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also reviewed other documentation.

I met with three members of the academy advisory board and spoke with a representative of the multi-academy trust. I considered the seven responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke with 10 parents. I reviewed the 25 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and spoke with several members of staff.