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Mrs Andrea Riley and Mr Alistair Darnell  
Headteachers  
Castleton Primary School  
Green Lane  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Riley and Mr Darnell

### **Short inspection of Castleton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 February 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 have successfully created a culture in which you expect all pupils to engage in learning and play a positive role in their school and community. You successfully provide an education that ensures the pupils' low starting points on entry are not a barrier to them achieving well.

You and other leaders have worked hard to create a curriculum which expands pupils' horizons and broadens their minds with unforgettable learning experiences. A wide range of trips, residential and guest speakers at school switch pupils on to learning. You and your teachers have created imaginative ways of encouraging pupils to want to write. For example, Year 2 pupils discovered a dragon's egg in their playground and this led to pupils enthusiastically wanting to develop their writing about this event.

You have made sure that there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. Nursery provision, which was an area for improvement, is now much stronger. Teachers are more in tune with children's interests and are responsive to exploiting these to build worthwhile learning experiences. Teachers work well together to ensure that there are regular and effective opportunities to develop children's speech and language skills.

You and other leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in early years, English and mathematics. In these areas, you regularly visit

classrooms to see for yourself the quality of teaching, the quality of work in pupils' exercise books and check these findings against assessment information. The checks you and middle leaders make across the wider curriculum are not as effective. You and your middle leaders do not have a clear enough picture of how well subjects such as history, geography, science and religious education are being taught. Consequently, leaders have not been quick enough in spotting the missed opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills across the wider curriculum.

You and other leaders do not shy away from areas that need to improve further. You have rightly identified the need to improve the progress children make in early years, improve reading by the end of key stage 1 and continue to improve writing across the school. There are signs that improvements are taking place, but you and leaders remain focused on making sure that these remain key priorities for all in school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All staff that I spoke with recognise and understand the central role they play in making sure that pupils are safe and secure in school. The record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children is well maintained and meets requirements. You make sure that effective checks are made on newly appointed staff before they join the school, including references that reassure you of their suitability.

Staff, including administrative staff, have benefited from the safeguarding training that you as the co-head teacher/designated safeguarding leader have organised. Recent training has helped staff appreciate the issues related to child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff feel more confident and capable in looking for potential concerns they may have about pupils' safety. Improved information and recording systems are leading to timely and effective communication within school on safeguarding matters.

You have worked hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Attendance remains high and persistent absence is low. You have developed a wide range of rewards, including trips to the bowling alley, the local cinema and a chance to win the weekly attendance trophy. The attendance of particular groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, has improved.

You have established effective partnerships with the ABC Centre, a local alternative provision for the small number of pupils struggling to cope in school. As a result, there have been no exclusions. School staff make daily and weekly contact with staff at the alternative provision to check that pupils are attending regularly and achieving.

Leaders have made sure that there are suitable plans in place to support the most vulnerable children and their families. Multi-agency plans show that there are clear outcomes agreed and a careful consideration of specific child and family needs.

Consequently, the most vulnerable pupils are making incremental but important progress.

### **Inspection findings**

- Phonics is taught well on a daily basis. Teachers are skilled in helping pupils to learn their letters and sounds. As a result, outcomes in the 2016 phonics screening check showed significant improvement from the previous year. Support staff effectively deliver phonics to smaller groups of pupils. Leaders are sensibly introducing phonics into nursery teaching, so laying the foundations for further learning.
- When I listened to younger pupils read, it clearly showed that teachers had an accurate grasp of how well pupils are progressing with their reading. Pupils who left early years without a good level of development could now sound out unfamiliar words with confidence and showed good levels of comprehension. You have fostered a desire for pupils to want to read by improving the library and providing opportunities for pupils to read at lunchtimes.
- In the light of disappointing 2016 outcomes in early years, leaders have set about putting in appropriate measures to improve. Leaders have introduced effective intervention to help current children improve their speech and communication. Leaders have also benefited from good support from the local authority. This has helped improve the outdoor provision, as well as helping pupils develop their gross and fine motor skills, better preparing them for mark making and writing. Leaders have improved the communication between school and home through improved reporting. This leads to a more effective two-way dialogue on how well children are progressing in and out of school.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is extremely strong. Pupils' work is well presented, clear and logically set out. Teachers provide pupils with regular mathematical challenges to stretch and deepen their understanding. There are also regular opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving. As a result, the pupils make excellent progress and attainment is above the national average.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. Pupils in key stage 1 have made significant improvements in their writing. Pupils are now able to write letters accurately, join up their writing and use punctuation with increasing consistency. Writing, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection, rightly remains a key priority given the often low starting points for many pupils.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not as sharp or as precise as they could be. Targets for improvement sometimes lack clear timescales for when improvements will be made. As a result, governors are not clear on whether improvements are happening fast enough and this hinders their ability to challenge leaders at times.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils increase their rates of progress in writing by improving the opportunities for pupils to practise their writing across the wider curriculum
- middle leaders effectively check on and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of pupils across the curriculum
- plans for improvement have clear timescales for when actions will occur and clearly show what impact this will have on pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I also met with a group of governors. I had telephone meetings with a local authority officer and with the leader of the ABC Centre, which you occasionally use for alternative provision. Together with you and other leaders, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also listened to some pupils read. Consideration was given to four free-text responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to nine staff survey responses. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school's own self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a range of documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled three vulnerable children's case files.