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Mrs S Fisher and Mrs L Dobson
Joint headteachers
Arksey Primary School
Ings Way
Arksey
Doncaster
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Dear Mrs Fisher and Mrs Dobson

Short inspection of Arksey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The effectiveness of your partnership as joint headteachers has ensured the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Your vision for the future is well defined and clearly recorded in your school improvement plan. Your joint evaluation of your own performance is both accurate and evaluative. You know your school well and face the challenges of managing the finances of a small school with imaginative prudence.

Your small but enthusiastic staff team share your vision and values. Their wealth of experience and enthusiasm means they often go over and above what would usually be expected in their role. For example, teaching assistants regularly take on extra duties in a voluntary capacity.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection say how much they enjoy coming to school. Their polite and caring attitudes are extended to each other, staff and visitors. This aspect of their behaviour was made apparent to me as I was talking to a group of pupils in the playground. Another pupil approached and asked very politely if I minded moving a little as I was standing very close to the goal and the team were concerned I may be hit by the ball. Comments such as 'learning is fun here' and 'teachers always want to know our opinions and that makes me feel grown up' reflect pupils' views well. Pupils' mature attitudes are reflected in the high standard of their behaviour both inside and outside the classroom.

As a very small school, you clearly recognise the difficulties surrounding interpreting the data describing the progress of groups of pupils. The effective system you have put in place enables you to measure the progress of individual pupils from their starting points. This bespoke approach also enables you to determine the progress of disadvantaged pupils and to analyse their needs very closely. The data from last year's national tests suggested that this group made less strong progress than other pupils nationally. The more detailed approach taken this year shows that currently disadvantaged pupils are making equal and better progress than other pupils nationally. This demonstrates that differences between these groups have diminished over time.

The quality of teaching and learning across the school has continued to improve and pupils' learning is good and better in most classes. You have worked hard to ensure that pupils are given a wealth of opportunities to improve their writing skills. Work in pupils' books demonstrates this well. However, currently, pupils' learning is slightly slower at the beginning of key stage 2. This is because planned activities do not always match the needs of learners as closely as in other areas of the school. This slows learning, particularly for the most able.

Most parents who spoke to me and those who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the provision the school makes for their children. Comments such as, 'This is a happy school which our children enjoy attending' and, 'I am really happy with the support I have received from staff. They have been brilliant and my child is making excellent progress' were typical of the comments made to me during the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and the governing body are united in the view that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility. The close working partnerships you have forged with other services are well documented in safeguarding records. Records clearly evidence the support given to pupils and their families.

Staff receive robust and regular training which ensures they have the knowledge and skills to respond to any issues which may arise. Current recruitment procedures follow national guidance and documents in staff files reflect this.

Your concern that the area in which the school is located has a higher-than-average number of children attending hospital accident and emergency services demonstrates your focus on keeping children safe. Your response, by introducing pupil health and safety monitors who patrol school, reporting on concerns, has been greeted enthusiastically by pupils. Pupils practise their writing skills with care when composing notes drawing the attention of the site manager to potential hazards around the school. Parents also report that their children identify hazards at home as well, demonstrating their understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- The small group of children who join the Reception class have a wide range of knowledge and skills. While some are in line with the level typical for their age some are below this level and a smaller proportion are above it. Many transfer from an on-site private nursery. Children settle very quickly because staff from both the school and nursery work closely together to ensure a smooth transition.
- The attainment of the small cohort of boys in some year groups last year was not as strong as that of others nationally. However, the cohort contained a group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The progress of this group of pupils was stronger over time. Currently, boys are progressing well and are on course to make greater gains this year.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved this year because staff have clearly identified their needs and have put in place closely matched support. This bespoke approach has enabled this group to make strong progress and currently they are making faster progress than others nationally.
- Last year, senior leaders were understandably disappointed by the dip in standards reached by Year 6 pupils in national reading tests. After a close analysis of the way in which reading is taught in school, a new system has been put in place. Current data shows that pupils are now making much stronger progress in reading and are on course to achieve above the standards expected nationally.
- Pupils make good progress across the school from their different starting points. However, progress sometimes slows for the most able pupils in the early part of key stage 2 because work set is not planned to match the needs of pupils sufficiently closely.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the close monitoring of the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils continues, especially in the early part of key stage 2 and for most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with senior leaders and staff. I met informally with parents at the beginning of the school day and spoke with pupils both inside and outside classrooms. I scrutinised a range of documents including the school's safeguarding documents, behaviour and attendance files and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress. I observed pupils' learning in all classes, accompanied by senior leaders, and analysed work in books across the school. I also held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body and took into account the views of 11 parents who filled in the online questionnaire, Parent View.