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Mrs A Fischer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fischer

Short inspection of Farnham Common Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2016, 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 your school was judged to be good in February 2008.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

This is a very effective school. You place pupils' well-being and enjoyment of learning at the heart of your vision, recognising the special features that you believe characterise high-quality education for young children. You display high levels of care for your pupils and are passionate about ensuring they enjoy their early school experience in a safe, nurturing environment. Governors and staff wholeheartedly embrace your vision, supporting you effectively. Central to your beliefs is making certain the curriculum provides a wealth of creative, first-hand opportunities to enhance and inspire pupils' learning. Parents highlight your leadership as a tremendous strength. They are highly appreciative of your work, commenting: 'Farnham Common Infant School is an excellent school which serves the local community and families very well.'

Many children start school with the skills and understanding typical for their age. In the early years, children make typical progress and the proportion who achieve a good level of development is above that seen nationally. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because of effective teaching. In 2015, most children achieved the standards expected for their age at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in writing

have risen markedly since 2014. In 2015, the proportion who achieved the higher levels was above the national average. However, despite appropriate interventions to help disadvantaged pupils catch up to their peers, in 2015 they achieved less well than others in the school and others nationally.

The teaching of reading is particularly strong. Pupils get off to a flying start in developing their early reading skills. This is because teaching of this aspect is very effective. Standards in the Year 1 national check on phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in 2015 were above the national average. Standards have risen year on year.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to increase the consistency and quality of teaching to that of the best. You were also asked to develop teachers' understanding of their roles as leaders of learning both in classrooms and when they have responsibility for curriculum subject areas. Leaders have addressed these aspects efficiently so that:

- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers are committed, as you describe, to being 'the best they can be'. Excellent support from the deputy headteacher ensures there are regular opportunities to develop teachers' skills and expertise. As a result, teaching is improving and there is a high level of consistency from class to class.
- Teachers feel confident to try out new ideas and ways of working. You give your team abundant scope to be innovators and discover for themselves what works well. For example, in early years, staff are trialling new ways to encourage children to think imaginatively and learn through creative play.
- Subject leaders, despite some being relatively new their roles, have constructed thoughtful action plans that identify appropriate improvement actions and align closely to school improvement priorities. Teachers and middle leaders exhibit high levels of commitment to improving the school further and developing the impact they are having on raising standards further.
- In September 2015, you took up post as executive headteacher of Farnham Common Junior School, initially for one term. This is now extended until the end of this academic year. Staff have responded well to 'stepping up' in your absence. As a result, leadership skills are developing appropriately across the whole team.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and procedures are rigorous.

Staff receive appropriate and timely training. They know what to do and who to talk to if they have a concern. Leaders have reviewed the school's policy and procedures. Governors make regular checks, meeting with you regularly and assuring themselves that systems are robust. You and the governors are beginning some very useful work to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's procedures. As a result, you are ensuring that procedures meet statutory expectations, such as the recent work to ensure pupils are protected from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

You have ensured that all required checks are undertaken routinely, guaranteeing adults' suitability to work with children. Governors have recently reviewed and made changes to the school's child protection policy. The changes adopted correctly reflect the latest guidance issued by the Department for Education.

Health and safety procedures are thorough. The school has received an excellence award from the local authority in recognition of meticulous work in this regard. Pupils feel safe. In addition, they have a well-developed understanding of how to manage risk effectively, including during outdoor activities. Teachers place high importance on keeping pupils safe. They reaffirm expectations, such as 'not putting your hands in your mouth' when handling bulbs and seeds. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe and minimise risk.

Inspection findings

- You display high levels of ambition and are determined the school continues to improve. The school improvement plan sets a clear, upward trajectory. You identify clearly the school's strengths and areas that require development. However, leaders are not evaluating strongly enough the impact they are having on accelerating pupils' progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The information published on the school's website relating to the impact of additional funding on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is incomplete.
- In recent times, there have been several changes to subject leadership. Although much of this work is at an early stage, leaders are taking greater responsibility and are working well with outside experts and with other schools, including the junior school. However, the impact on raising standards is less clear as leaders have yet to evaluate fully the difference they are making, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- New staff are well supported as the school's induction processes are comprehensive. You are thorough in ensuring new members of staff get up to speed swiftly, knowing Farnham Common Infant School's priorities and expected ways of working. Work to ensure safeguarding procedures are fully understood is particularly helpful and thorough.
- Teaching is effective. Teachers plan engaging activities that encourage pupils to find things out for themselves and use their reasoning skills effectively. Pupils love the opportunity to get 'hands on' and explore concepts, showing great zest for learning. In a Year 1 science lesson, pupils enthusiastically explored the differences between bulbs and seeds, transfixed by the view through a magnifying glass. Consequently, pupils develop their scientific knowledge and understanding well, enhancing their understanding of the world around them.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average but has increased in recent years. You ensure that pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils are supported well by teaching assistants. You regularly review this work to check that it is making a difference.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. Teachers have high expectations and plan activities that challenge pupils fully. Pupils try their best to master new

skills such as finding fractions of amounts in mathematics. Occasionally, work for lower-ability pupils is not matched closely enough to pupils' starting points and pupils find tasks too hard. When this is the case, progress slows.

- Outdoor learning opportunities are prevalent throughout the curriculum. For example, Year 1 thoroughly enjoyed using the school's forest area to hunt for, and find, the wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood*. The school holds a green flag award and has an active eco council. Leaders manage the school grounds well; growing areas, a bird feeding area and bug hotel section are maintained to a high standard. Leaders' plans to extend the outdoor area in the early years classes are wise. This will provide even greater opportunities to make use of splendid outdoor learning facilities.
- Well-planned activities bring literature to life, encouraging pupils to develop a love of reading and storytelling. Pupils talk excitedly about the reintroduced focus on listening to 'chapter books' in class, including the classics such as *The Lion*, *The Witch* and *The Wardrobe*. Standards in reading have risen and pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability, get off to a cracking start in getting to grips with early reading skills, firmly rooted in a love of books.
- Pupils apply their phonics skills well to writing and enjoy exploring vocabulary choices to make their writing appeal to the reader. Motivated by a love of storytelling and inspired by visiting authors, pupils are keen to write engaging texts that capture the reader's interest. Standards in writing have risen and are above those seen nationally.
- Pupils are thoughtful and considerate. They have a well-developed sense of values such as empathy, perseverance and collaboration. They can explain in depth what these values mean to them and apply them readily to their own experiences. Pupils confidently listen to one another, take turns and share resources, right from the word go.
- Bullying is very unusual. Staff are highly skilled at intervening quickly to ensure that minor disagreements or fallouts do not escalate. Equally, pupils play their part, knowing the school's expectations well. Pupils and children in the early years are highly adept at seeking resolutions and resolving minor disagreements. This is because they learn how to be problem solvers and seek solutions for themselves.
- Attendance is average. Pupils enjoy school and particularly enjoy learning. They confidently state that they 'would like to stay at school longer to learn even more'. However, some groups of pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs or a disability, have an above average rate of absence. School leaders are working closely with families to ensure regular attendance is the norm.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They respond to their teachers without hesitation, eager to please. In assembly pupils listen attentively to the speaker and are able to settle swiftly even after periods of excitement. Pupils sing well and delight in celebrating each other's achievements such as winning the 'golden boot' for walking, cycling or using scooters to travel to school as part of the school's promotion of living a healthy lifestyle.
- Sports funding is used effectively. A comprehensive programme of cycling skills weaves through the curriculum seamlessly and all age groups benefit.

Pupils in the early years develop their balancing and motor control skills well and older pupils learn to ride their bicycles or scooters safely. This programme contributes well to pupils' health and well-being.

- Pupils have regular opportunities to reinforce their learning at home. They enjoy home–school projects and parents support this aspect of learning well. The school is characterised by a warm, family feel enhanced by eye-catching displays that celebrate pupils' families, interest and backgrounds. Governors and leaders hold dear the strong partnership between school and parents. Equally, this is reciprocated and the vast majority of parents regularly attend consultation evenings, exemplifying high levels of engagement.
- Transition from class to class is highly effective. In September, each pupil fills a shoebox with personal objects that demonstrate their interests to their new teacher. This means that relationships between teachers and pupils are well founded and positive right from the word go. Equally, the transition from infant school to junior school is effective. With the new interim headship arrangements, the schools are working more closely together and forging stronger links. Pupils feel confident about their next steps as transitional arrangements are top notch and they leave Farnham Common Infant School well prepared for the challenges of Year 3.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of pupil premium funding on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is evaluated fully and published on the school's website
- tasks are matched appropriately to pupils' starting points, particularly in mathematics and for lower-attaining pupils or those with special educational needs or a disability
- all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs or a disability attend school regularly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the teacher with responsibility for mathematics and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I also met with four pupils in Key Stage 1 who belong to the school council. I also took account of the 98 responses to the pupils' online survey. I observed learning in nine lessons, all jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher, and scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 31 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the views of 13 members of the school team who responded to the online survey for staff. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.