

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Deborah Ashcroft  
Headteacher  
Regent Farm First School  
Wansbeck Road South  
Gosforth  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE3 3PE

Dear Mrs Ashcroft

### **Short inspection of Regent Farm First School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 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 continued to ensure that the school is a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment in which pupils are happy and thrive. The steps you have taken to improve the quality of provision in the Nursery and Reception classes have ensured that children get off to an excellent start and quickly develop the fundamental skills to support their future progress. Your younger children benefit greatly from the richly resourced learning environment and from the carefully designed activities that build on their interests. Pupils enjoy coming to school, are respectful of one another and develop a sense of responsibility through roles such as playtime buddies, peer readers or school council representatives. The school's international links help pupils to develop a sensitive understanding of the different lives that children lead elsewhere in the world.

Since your previous inspection you have consistently sustained standards above those seen nationally. In 2016, outcomes at the end of the Reception Year continued to improve, although you were disappointed to see standards at key stage 1 dip slightly last year. You acted quickly to identify the reasons for this and the actions you have taken since then have sharpened the quality of teaching. Pupils currently in the school are on track to attain more highly at the end of key stage 1 this year. Such a response reflects the determination, resolve and quality of

leadership at different levels across the school.

Your previous inspection challenged you to ensure that the quality of teaching was at least good across the school. The visits we made to classrooms demonstrated that your teachers have high expectations and regularly challenge pupils to think deeply. You have provided some excellent training opportunities for teachers, who have responded by developing their practice. For example, they have raised the standard of pupils' handwriting and have begun to implement new approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Teachers ensure that lessons move along briskly. Pupils take pride in their work and many are excited by the engaging topics your teachers plan for them.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is the highest of priorities. You make rigorous checks on all adults who work in or visit the school and ensure that pupils are well supervised at all times. Your staff are well trained and understand the duty on them to act if they have any concerns about a child's welfare. You and other safeguarding leaders have well-developed links with the community and work closely with families to provide therapy or counselling, where it is required. Swift action is taken to protect children at risk of harm and good partnerships exist with external partners to ensure that resolutions are sought. Governors regularly review the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and ensure that statutory requirements are fully met.

### **Inspection findings**

- Purposeful leadership and strong teaching ensure that children settle quickly and make sustained progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of the early years the proportion of children reaching the expected standard has risen steadily over recent years to be well above that seen nationally. Most children are well prepared to begin more formal teaching in Year 1.
- In recent years outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening test have been similar to those seen nationally. The school's programme for teaching phonics, introduced 18 months ago, is now fully established and teachers are knowledgeable and confident in your preferred approach. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to reach the expected standard. Pupils who fall short of the standard receive additional support and are heard to read every day by their teacher. As a result, almost all make the necessary progress and reach the expected standard by the end of Year 2.
- Last year, a greater proportion of Year 2 pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than seen nationally. However, the proportion attaining the higher level was no better than the national average, in part because some disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress. You and your teachers are acutely aware of this. You are tracking pupils' progress carefully and providing extra support for any pupil who falls behind. Your most recent assessment information and the work in books show that more pupils are on course to attain the higher measure this year.

- Pupils make strong progress in Years 3 and 4, with the vast majority of pupils working at or above the expected standard for their age. Disadvantaged pupils currently in these year groups are attaining similar standards to their peers. Some new approaches to the teaching of mathematics, which emphasise the skills of reasoning and problem-solving, are developing pupils' confidence more rapidly. This emerging good practice now needs to be shared across the school so that mathematics teaching becomes consistently strong.
- Attendance levels, which have been in line with the national average, have improved this year because you and other leaders work hard to support particular parents who struggle to ensure that their children attend well. This approach has improved the attendance of all key groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' efforts to meet and greet parents at the school gate each day ensure good punctuality. Channels of communication with parents are good and you are responsive to parents' concerns. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire would recommend the school, feeling that it is well led and managed.
- The governors are very active in the school and provide you with excellent support and challenge. They analyse information on the school's performance carefully and make good use of the local authority challenge partner's reports to target their visits. As a result, the governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses in detail. They manage your performance and the performance of your staff well by focusing your objectives on the most pressing areas for improvement. Their regular visits across the year are well focused and provide an informative evaluation of the school's effectiveness.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils build on the strong start they make in the early years to attain the higher level in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1
- expertise in the teaching of mathematics is fostered across the school and accelerates pupils' progress in the subject.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Newcastle upon Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection I pursued the following lines of enquiry:

- Are pupils making strong and sustained progress across key stage 1? Is there good provision in place for pupils who start Year 1 below the expected standard? Are more pupils on track to reach the higher standard by the end of Year 2?
- Are pupils making strong progress in Years 3 and 4? Do different groups of pupils make consistently strong progress?
- Are leaders taking effective action to improve attendance and reduce the number of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school?
- Is the quality of teaching, learning and assessment consistently good or better?
- Do governors have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders to account effectively?
- Are child protection and safeguarding arrangements robust and is there a culture of vigilance shared by all members of staff?

During the inspection I met with you, your special educational needs coordinator, a group of teachers, your local authority challenge partner and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I listened to some pupils read and spoke with pupils both formally and informally during social times and in lessons. You and I visited a number of lessons across each phase of the school. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' books alongside middle leaders of English and mathematics. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, assessment information, attendance data and safeguarding policies. I reviewed information on the school's website. I also took into account the views of parents through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.