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7 March 2017

Nikki Matthew  
Headteacher  
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Dear Nikki Matthew

### **Short inspection of Farndon Fields Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 October 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, together with senior leaders and managers, have ensured that the school has continued to improve during a time of significant staff changes. You provide the support and training that staff need in order to do their jobs well. You make sure that less-experienced members of staff receive good guidance through professional development opportunities and the sharing of effective practice.

You, and your senior leaders, identify the right priorities. You set challenging targets for staff and pupils to work towards. At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve development plans to enable those responsible for governance to be more fully involved in holding the school to account. Leaders, including academy trustees, have addressed this effectively. Plans now include clear timescales and expected outcomes. Members of the advisory board, who are responsible for governance, are involved in checking how well the school is working towards its aims.

Your school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils say they like school and they know the importance of good attendance. You and your staff promote pupils' personal development well. Staff encourage pupils to take an interest in their learning and offer parents various opportunities to be involved, although leaders recognise that not all parents are fully engaged. Pupils recognise that the support they receive helps them to improve, summed up in the comment, 'Teachers are

very encouraging and push us further.' Pupils share ideas with each other confidently during lessons and are involved in deciding for themselves how they can do better. They socialise well during playtimes although older pupils have greater access to resources and apparatus than some of the younger pupils.

You have identified key areas of the curriculum that need improving. You have introduced a consistent approach to the teaching of writing which is speeding up pupils' progress. Pupils write in a range of subjects. Those I spoke to during my visit said that they like writing about the Romans or the Egyptians because they find the topics interesting. This means that pupils, and particularly boys, are motivated to write. Although spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught well and regularly, pupils do not systematically use what they know to ensure that spelling is accurate whenever they write.

You have improved the teaching of phonics and standards are rising. Pupils who need to catch up, including the disadvantaged, receive regular extra help to accelerate their progress.

When I listened to pupils read, they told me that they like the choice of books on offer. They said that they are helped to develop their comprehension skills during reading sessions in class. The younger pupils tackled new words by using what they knew about phonics. Older pupils, including the most able, read fluently and showed good understanding of plot and characters.

In mathematics, you and your leaders make sure that pupils consolidate and practise their skills. You have identified any gaps in pupils' knowledge, for example the mental recall of number facts, and you ensure a consistent approach to teaching. You are widening opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills, for example during mathematics workshops. However, there is room for developing and deepening pupils' understanding more fully during lessons so that those who grasp concepts quickly have good opportunity to use and apply their knowledge.

Since the previous inspection, when leaders were asked to check the quality of teaching more frequently, you have introduced a range of ways for leaders to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Regular meetings with teachers help to identify those pupils who are doing well and those who need to improve, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders evaluate thoroughly any extra help that pupils receive to make sure that it is effective in helping pupils to improve. Teachers receive the guidance they need to help them to ensure that teaching is effective for all groups of pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your designated leaders maintain robust and comprehensive systems which are understood by staff. Vetting procedures for adults who work with children are thorough. Staff receive regular updates and guidance so that they know how to keep children safe. Any concerns over children's welfare are recorded and leaders

show perseverance in following up any worries they may have. There are good links with external agencies and families, which aids communication should any concerns over children's welfare arise. Annual audits of safeguarding procedures are carried out by the academy trust to ensure that all systems and policies are fit for purpose.

Leaders maintain a focus on children's welfare and well-being. Pupils receive help to express any worries or concerns that they may have, illustrated by a parent who commented, 'Farndon Fields has been a breath of fresh air, with both its positive approach to academic schooling as well as the additional emotional support and care given.' Regular family workshops provide guidance and support to parents.

Pupils say that they feel safe. The majority of parents who expressed their views during the inspection agree that their children are happy and feel safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because of the guidance they receive during their learning. They know about the different forms of bullying, including when using technology and the potential risks of social media. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem in their school. They say that any incidents are resolved by staff and their parents are involved. The school's records show that incidents, including those of inappropriate behaviour, are logged and followed up. Leaders shared recent changes with parents and involve pupils in understanding the anti-bullying policy.

Safety issues are addressed effectively by the curriculum. Leaders make good use of external resources, including the local police force, to help pupils to understand how to keep safe from potential threats such as extremism and exploitation.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders gather parents' views through regular questionnaires. They act upon findings to help the school to improve. For example, recent changes to anti-bullying procedures are as a result of feedback from parents.
- There are various opportunities for parents to receive information about their children's progress and to be involved in their children's learning.
- There is room for greater engagement with those parents who do not willingly participate in order for them to develop a greater understanding of the school's work and to ensure that their views are valued. Some parents who submitted comments during the inspection feel that communication could improve.
- A consistent approach to the teaching of writing is paying off and pupils make good progress. Those who are currently in Year 6 are on track to make better progress than previous cohorts. However, not all pupils yet spell accurately when they write.
- Pupils who need to catch up are doing well. Disadvantaged pupils receive extra support during lessons so that they consolidate what they learn. Leaders monitor progress closely to ensure that pupils keep up. Well-targeted extra help for those pupils who need it builds self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities become successful learners. They receive the right level of support and resources in lessons to help

them to do well. Those who work closely with adults build good relationships and show positive attitudes to their learning.

- Progress in mathematics is improving throughout the school although there is room for pupils to develop a greater depth of understanding through reasoning and applying their skills.
- Attendance is improving as a result of the school's actions. Leaders check any patterns in absence and follow up the reasons why pupils stay away from school. The number of pupils who are frequently absent is reducing. Leaders successfully help parents to see the link between good attendance and their children's achievement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers expect pupils to use correct spelling whenever they write
- teachers provide tasks in mathematics that develop pupils' reasoning skills and use of mathematics more widely
- there are wider opportunities to engage with parents in order to consider and to respond positively to their views
- there is more effective use of space and resources during the lunchtime to engage pupils of all ages.

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

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and a representative of the academy trust. I also met the chair of the advisory board. I visited some classes with you to observe the teaching of English and mathematics. I spoke to pupils during lessons about their work and I listened to some of the most able and less able pupils read. I also met with a group of pupils and looked at some examples of their writing. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the improvement plan. I discussed the school's assessment information with leaders. I took into account the 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account written responses and the 42 freetext responses from parents. I spoke

to some parents at the start and the end of the school day. I analysed the 12 responses to the questionnaire submitted by school staff. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks and other documentation relating to safeguarding.