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Mr Kevin Rae
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Rae

Short inspection of Ferrars Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 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 January 2013.

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 made a significant and positive difference in the relatively short time you have been headteacher at the school. In 2016, assessment information shows that the outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were not good enough because pupils did not make fast enough progress. Your determination to improve outcomes has got the school rapidly back on track so that current pupils are receiving a good and improving education and most are making good progress. Morale among the staff team is high and staff members' responses to Ofsted's questionnaire were universally positive.

You and your senior leaders, some of whom started their roles in September 2016, have implemented robust policies and procedures that have enabled you to examine all aspects of the school. Your leadership team is thorough in the analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, your self-evaluation is accurate and your plans for school improvement are clear. This has ensured a rapid improvement in pupils' achievement.

You have created a highly inclusive school where all pupils are welcomed and valued. The school is a haven of calm and cooperation. This is evident in classes and around the school, where adults and pupils clearly enjoy working together. Pupils told me, 'This school always makes people feel welcome and happy. The teachers always help us and explain important things really well.' This reflects their accurate view that all pupils are well known by you and by all adults, who take very

good care of them.

Almost all parents are very pleased with the school under your leadership, many of whom were previously dissatisfied with the school. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Typical of the parents' comments made was one which stated, 'Nothing is too much trouble and the staff are amazing. The progress my child has made is phenomenal.' In particular, parents appreciate the many opportunities they have to come into the school and the newly designed website with its breadth of information on how parents can support their children's learning at home.

Governors spoke with pride about the school and share your enthusiasm and desire to improve it further. Apart from the experienced chair, the governors are relatively new to their roles. Recent training from the local authority has increased their knowledge and understanding of all aspects of governance and enabled them to carry out their duties effectively. Consequently, governors challenge leaders confidently and hold them to account for key aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding, attendance and pupils' achievement.

At the time of the school's previous inspection, the report noted many strengths, including the good quality of teaching and the high expectations of the staff. It recommended that the quality of teaching in mathematics should improve to ensure that all pupils make good progress in this subject. Since your appointment last year, you have used the support of an external consultant to provide focused training for staff. As a result, teachers' subject knowledge has improved. This has led to higher expectations and a consistent teaching approach across the school. In 2016, pupils made stronger progress in mathematics than the previous year, and standards moved closer to the national average.

You, governors and other leaders are not complacent and recognise that the school can be even better. You have identified clear priorities for development and are taking the right steps to achieve them through your focused improvement plans. Leaders, including governors, know that pupils' rapid progress will only continue if teaching is even better and expectations remain high. You are working with leaders in the school to secure these further improvements so that pupils continue to achieve well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Rigorous checks are carried out on adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering at the school. The single central record is well maintained and up to date. You ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand their responsibilities and are quick to report any concerns to the school's designated safeguarding leaders. The school's records show that all concerns are rigorously followed up. Regular meetings take place between the key personnel in school to

review how well vulnerable pupils are doing and if there are any further ways they can be supported. You ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with the necessary skills to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Pupils said that they feel happy, safe and settled in school. They told me that they know how to keep safe, for example, when using the internet. Pupils also said that there is no bullying at the school, and that they can talk to any adult in the school about any worries they may have. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, and around the school. This is due to the very positive relationships they have with staff and the high standards of behaviour that all staff consistently expect of them.

The parents who responded to Parent View, and those I spoke to, very strongly agreed that their children are happy and safe in school.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, one of the key lines of enquiry I checked was how effectively leaders are improving the quality of teaching across the school and, consequently, the achievement of pupils. This is because, historically, the standards pupils have reached in reading, writing and mathematics have not been high enough.
- Since joining the school you have taken decisive action to secure a rapid upturn in outcomes for current pupils. You have rightly focused on developing the quality of leadership across the school. The senior leadership team has expanded, and the leadership skills and expectations of middle leaders have been developed to create greater challenge and rigour across the school. You have provided less experienced leaders with training and support so they now carry out more thorough checks on the quality of teaching and learning. You have introduced a new assessment system so that leaders are better able to identify where pupils make the best progress and where progress is slower.
- As a result of this rigorous monitoring, leaders are effectively securing school improvement. Current pupils are now making at least good progress and standards are rising rapidly. However, you are well aware that leaders need to sustain these improvements so that the achievement of pupils continues to improve further.
- The second line of enquiry focused on whether the good quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. As a result of focused training, teachers now have a good understanding of what pupils know and can do. This ensures that teachers plan work that is matched well to pupils' different ages, needs and abilities.
- The relationship between pupils and staff is positive, encouraging and highly conducive to learning. As one pupil enthusiastically said, 'The teachers always help us, and explain things really well so we don't get stuck.' Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide effective support for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books, displays around the school and

the school's assessment information indicate that the quality of teaching is typically good. Pupils are happy, confident and achieving well across all subjects. You acknowledge that to further improve pupils' writing pupils need more opportunities to apply their skills through creative and open-ended writing tasks.

- My final line of enquiry was to explore whether disadvantaged pupils who are currently at the school are making good progress. The reason for looking at this area was that the results of the key stage 2 national assessments in 2016 showed that disadvantaged pupils at your school achieved less well than other pupils nationally.
- You have taken steps to improve provision for disadvantaged pupils. The additional pupil premium funding provided by the government is being used well to provide extra help to move disadvantaged pupils' learning forward quickly. You also ensure that pupils access enrichment activities such as trips, visits and clubs to broaden their experiences and build their self-esteem.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is tracked very closely and monitored regularly. Leaders use this information effectively to ensure that pupils are given the right support to enable them to achieve well. As a result, it is evident that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress throughout the school, and leaders' actions are diminishing the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- Sustain recent improvements, by:
 - maintaining rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by leaders at all levels
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils remain high so that the rates of pupils' progress accelerate further and standards continue to improve
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills through creative writing tasks.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with you, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and the chair of the governing body, where we discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection. We considered the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement, and information about current pupils' attendance, progress and attainment.
- A range of evidence was gathered to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observations of teaching and learning, jointly with you, in some classes and sampling of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey to take into consideration. However, I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with you and the school's other designated safeguarding leads.
- I also met with the local authority adviser.
- The views of 12 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account, as well as the nine responses that parents made using the free-text service.
- The 28 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were also considered to obtain staff views.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.