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Mr Rob Clarke  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Clarke

### **Short inspection of Falcon Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 December 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 and the assistant headteachers have stepped up to the plate admirably following the sudden illness of the headteacher. It is a tribute to the accomplished way that he has developed your leadership skills that you have so smoothly carried on the work of the school with no loss of momentum or drive. The strong policies and procedures he has implemented mean that the school continues to run effectively while he is away. You are also well supported by a strong governing body that offers insight and provides challenge.

Leaders and governors know the school very well. You acted swiftly, following disappointing results in mathematics in 2016, to bring about changes. These have had an extremely positive impact on this year's outcomes for Year 6 pupils. Problem-solving and reasoning are important elements of your provision in mathematics. I saw for myself the high expectations in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where the most able pupils were asked to devise a nine-point elimination problem using a 100 square. They tackled this with gusto.

Teaching is consistently strong across the school. Teachers are confident and know their subjects well. They make learning interesting for the pupils and challenge their thinking. Teachers make sure that work takes into account pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, so that it is not too easy or too difficult for them.

Books show that pupils make good progress over time in English and mathematics. Teachers have high expectations, and this is reflected in the pride that pupils take in their work and how they take on board feedback. In Years 5 and 6, pupils write fluently and with neat handwriting. Pupils' handwriting is more variable when they arrive in Year 3 and gradually improves over Years 3 and 4. However, pupils do not master a consistent script soon enough.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic about their work. Pupils who spoke to the inspector read with confidence and expression and were rightly proud of the quality of their written work. The good practice evident in the school has been confirmed by the very positive national test results in all subjects this year.

Pupils are considerate of one another and willingly take responsibility, for example as anti-bullying ambassadors and house captains. They wear their 'stars' with pride. These signify the many times that pupils have behaved well or produced good work, or demonstrated the school's 'Olympic values', which include equality, courage and inspiration.

The curriculum is rich and diverse, especially in sport, music and the arts. It is enriched by trips to places of interest such as Kew Gardens and London Zoo. Pupils can take part in many different sports, including athletics and 'ultimate frisbee'. For the third time, pupils won the regional heats to represent the East of England at national finals for model-car racing, sponsored by an elite motor manufacturer. They designed and made their own turbo-charged cars, which raced at speeds in excess of 60mph. The school's choir of over 200 pupils was awarded 'commended plus' at the Norfolk Music Festival.

Parents love their school. All those who spoke to me were full of enthusiasm and appreciation for the way the school educates and cares for its children. They spoke very highly of the headteacher and staff. In addition, the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were all very positive, with 100% of parents stating that they would recommend the school to others.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that pupils are safe. Your procedures are rigorous and records are meticulously kept. The school works closely with other agencies and families to protect vulnerable pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that all checks are carried out correctly when recruiting staff and that they are suitable to work with children. You have taken on board suggestions from governors to improve your procedures, for example by making it easier to identify different groups of staff. Staff have all had up-to-date training in safeguarding matters, and are aware of their duties, such as those relating to child sexual exploitation and the 'Prevent' duty. They make known any concerns, following the correct procedures, and leaders act upon them swiftly, recording their actions.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school, that bullying is not a problem, and that they have confidence in adults to resolve any problems they may have.

## Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting, we agreed together some key lines of enquiry to explore so that I could be satisfied that the school remains good. First of all, we considered pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This was because, in the 2016 national tests, pupils' progress was low and their attainment was below average in mathematics.
- You swiftly carried out a thorough review of provision in mathematics following last year's disappointing results. You realised that pupils needed to be more confident in applying their knowledge to solving problems and that they needed to develop stamina in completing their calculations efficiently. You set up interventions to tackle specific gaps in pupils' understanding and used staff with specialist skills in teaching mathematics to plug them. You also deployed staff more creatively to have maximum impact, including giving additional support that same day to pupils who struggled with understanding a concept, so that their confusion was cleared up straight away.
- As a result of the successful measures you have implemented this year, in the provisional Year 6 national test results, attainment at the expected standard in mathematics was above average. This was a significant improvement on the previous year. Almost 30 of the Year 6 pupils who were not on track to reach the expected standard at the start of the year were successful in achieving it by the end. In focusing on ensuring that all those who could do so reached the expected standard in Year 6, you accept that more pupils could have reached the higher standard. However, internal data shows that in all other year groups a significant proportion of pupils are attaining above what would be expected for their age.
- The second line of enquiry we agreed was around the extent to which pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress across the school. This was because this group of pupils made poor progress in all subjects in national tests in 2016.
- It was clear from my discussions with you and the special needs coordinator that staff know pupils as individuals and cater well for their needs. I saw this for myself as I undertook learning walks across the school. I noted how skilful staff are in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and how they enable them to grow in confidence and succeed in their work.
- Current data shows that this group of pupils are making good progress this year and some are doing especially well. For example, in phonics, pupils are making up to two years' progress over a single year. You keep very good records of the progress and attainment of individual pupils.
- The final key line of enquiry we agreed related to the expectations that teachers have of all pupils, especially those in Year 3 and the most able. These were highlighted as areas to improve at the previous inspection. Pupils with high prior attainment did not go on to make good progress in reading or mathematics in 2016, and the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards were below average in reading, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- You quickly establish what Year 3 pupils know and can do following the long summer holiday and as they adjust to settling into their new school. Teaching

staff immediately put interventions in place to support those pupils whose progress needs to accelerate. Year 3 pupils settle quickly into school life, enjoy their work and develop good work habits that equip them well for the rest of their school careers.

- Your internal school progress information shows how Year 3 pupils have made good progress over time and how the attainment of most of them is where you would expect it to be by the end of the year. In addition, a significant proportion of Year 3 pupils are performing above the expectations for their age. This is because, in English and mathematics in particular, pupils across the school, and especially the most able, are given challenging work to do that makes demands on them and extends their thinking.
- Nonetheless, in some other subjects, such as history and science, there is more variation in teachers' expectations of what pupils can do. When this happens the quality of work is not as strong and on occasions the most able pupils are not given tasks that challenge them enough to make rapid progress.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standard of pupils' work, and the expectations of what can be achieved, is as strong in other subjects as it is in English and mathematics, especially for the most able.
- pupils adopt a consistent and neat style of handwriting earlier in their school careers.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other school leaders, the chair and two other governors, administration staff and pupils. I also met with a representative from the local authority. Short visits were made to all classrooms, where books were scrutinised and interventions observed. A range of documents, policies and assessment information were examined. I met with parents in the playground before school and considered questionnaire responses from parents and staff.