

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Anne Batley  
Headteacher  
Ernehale Junior School  
Derwent Crescent  
Gedling Road  
Arnold  
Nottinghamshire  
NG5 6TA

Dear Ms Batley

### **Short inspection of Ernehale Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2018, 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 predecessor school was judged to good in December 2014.

### **This school continues to be good**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. The school joined the Flying High Academy Trust shortly after the inspection of the predecessor school. Staff who shared their views all agree that this development has been a great success. They say that the school is on an exciting journey as it strives to 'be the best it can...and a little better'.

Both you and the leaders of the trust place a high emphasis on training and staff development. Staff told me about the 'incredible support' they receive through the trust, including many opportunities to work with colleagues in other schools. They judge these as crucial to the continuing improvement of teaching and learning. In all of the lessons I visited, pupils were enjoying their learning, free from interruptions or any disruptive behaviour. Pupils were proud to share their work. They confidently talked about what they were learning.

Working with the trust, you have improved the effectiveness of senior leadership. Members of the leadership team praise the quality of leadership training they have received. They say that they play a much stronger role in school improvement than in the past. They now undertake more-frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning. However, they stressed that while these are rigorous, they are characterised by support and respect for colleagues.

You, the staff and governors place a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. The school's values are prominently displayed throughout the school.

My conversations with pupils and observations of lessons showed that these values are threaded into their daily experiences at Ernehale. Classrooms are organised to promote high self-esteem, independence and a sense of being part of 'Team Ernehale'. The curriculum includes an exciting range of visits and visitors. For example, a recent visit to the Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire added much to the pupils' knowledge of the Second World War. Music is central to the life of the school. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument and their singing skills are renowned in venues across the local area.

Pupils leave Ernehale very well prepared for their secondary schools. Standards at the end of Year 6 are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are keen to raise standards even higher by increasing the proportion of pupils making above-average progress in writing and mathematics. Your analysis of pupils' performance identifies that in mathematics, reasoning skills need further development. Ensuring that pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop these skills is a priority in your school improvement plan. You are working to improve progress in writing through a number of approaches. These include promoting a love of reading among the pupils. Teachers now focus more sharply on how successful authors grab and hold their readers' attention. As a result, pupils are learning how choices they make about vocabulary, grammar and punctuation can improve the quality of their written work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Parents and carers, staff and pupils all appreciate the care that you take to ensure that the school is a safe place to be.

You make sure that all staff are very knowledgeable and aware of the potential risks to children's well-being. They are kept regularly up to date through notices, briefings and team meetings. Any concerns raised are responded to quickly and thoroughly investigated. Referrals are made in a timely manner and records are kept confidentially and securely. Your safeguarding procedures are regularly quality assured by a member of the governing body and by a member of the trust with suitable expertise. As a result, procedures and policies are very thorough.

Pupils are well informed on how to keep themselves and others safe through assemblies and lessons. The curriculum includes a sharp focus on online safety. Those pupils spoken with said that they feel very safe in school because of the way staff look after them.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, you and I agreed some aspects of the school's work that we would consider closely. The first of these was how teachers help the lower-attaining pupils achieve well at school. When pupils start in Year 3, a priority is to equip all pupils with the phonic skills necessary to be successful readers and writers. Teachers track very closely how well pupils learn in the daily

phonics sessions. There is encouraging evidence that pupils who initially had weak phonic skills make particularly rapid progress.

- Teachers have high ambitions for all pupils. Lower-attainers work in lessons towards the same learning objectives. Sometimes, teachers or teaching assistants provide extra help before or after a lesson. These sessions are very successful in helping the lower-attaining pupils keep up with their peers. During our visits to lessons, we saw lower-attaining pupils working with purpose and enthusiasm.
- Where necessary, teaching assistants provide additional help in the afternoons. The impact of this support is checked very closely. If it is not accelerating pupils' progress, teachers revise their plans and implement fresh approaches to helping the pupils.
- I also considered how effectively teachers provide work that challenges the most able pupils. In the English and mathematics lessons we visited, teachers had set a range of challenges from which pupils selected the ones that best suited them. Pupils showed great maturity in deciding the tasks that were appropriate. The 'Epic' challenges in mathematics and the 'Expert' tasks in English motivate the most able pupils. They ensure that pupils can learn the topics being covered in depth. There are similarly high expectations across the curriculum. For example, the most able pupils love the opportunities to work on individual projects on subjects that interest them. In the past, these have included topics as diverse as slavery and dyslexia. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained high standards in reading, writing and mathematics was double the national average. This reflects the school's high aspirations for its most-able pupils.
- Staff who shared their views all agree that the school has improved since it joined the Flying High Academy Trust. The school has a team of teachers and teaching assistants who are proud to work at Ernehale Junior. They value your leadership. When one teacher commented good-naturedly, 'She never lets us stay in our comfort zone,' she was expressing her admiration for your unrelenting focus on striving for school improvement. Staff are keen to help one another improve their practice for the benefit of the pupils. For example, they share videos of their teaching and reflect openly on what went well in a lesson and what could be improved. Staff also value the opportunities they have to support staff in other trust schools. The expertise, ambition and enthusiasm of your staff place the school in a strong position to keep on improving.
- In meetings with staff and pupils, I also looked into how well the school promotes the pupils' social and emotional well-being. These meetings confirmed the overwhelmingly positive views of parents about your school. The school's values are based around 'Take Care' principles and this phrase is part of the everyday vocabulary at Ernehale. Pupils do 'take care' of each other, of how well they are learning and of their environment. As a result, they feel secure, enjoy themselves and strive to achieve well in everything they do. Nevertheless, you are determined to build upon these strengths by improving the expertise among staff to promote good mental health. Key members of staff are currently receiving training to enable them to lead on this important next step.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers embed and develop further the improvements they have made in the quality of teaching so that greater proportions of pupils make above-average progress in writing and mathematics
- effective training enables staff to promote even more effectively the good mental well-being of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the vice-chairs of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the Flying High Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with two senior officers of the Flying High Academy Trust and spoke to three members of the local governing body. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school. We jointly visited classes to observe pupils learning, speak with them and look at their books. I heard pupils read.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping the pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I considered the 49 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with the views of parents as they brought their children to school. I also considered the views of 24 members of staff and eight pupils.