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Jennifer Allin
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Dear Mrs Allin

Short inspection of Fairfield Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 the school was judged to be good in December 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Pupils' attainment of the expected standard in reading has been at least in line with national average for the past two years. However, this has not been the case for pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics. In both of these subjects, levels of attainment have been well below the national average. The school's performance information and the books that I looked at show that there is now an improvement in pupils' attainment in both of these subjects. However, currently not enough pupils in Year 2 are on track to achieve at least the expected standard for their age.

In the short time that you have been headteacher, you have identified that teachers' assessment of pupils' progress has not been sufficiently accurate. Because of this, teachers have not been able to provide pupils with effective support to ensure that they make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.

You have been quick to take action to resolve this issue. You have provided teachers with opportunities to work together across the different year groups to check the accuracy of their assessments. Now, all teachers have a secure understanding of the age-related expectations of pupils in the different year groups, and of the progress that their own pupils must make to meet these expectations. You have also increased the regularity of leaders' meetings with teachers to check on pupils' progress. These

meetings now take place once every half term. This has ensured that leaders can identify quickly which pupils are not making good progress.

These developments are recent and require further work to ensure that all teachers are consistently accurate in their assessment of pupils' learning. Furthermore, you recognise that teachers must begin to use this information more effectively to identify quickly those pupils who require further support to make good progress. Securing teachers' better use of assessment information to promote stronger progress for pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, is a key priority that you have identified for your school.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recommended an increase in the number of leaders, who have an oversight of the quality of teaching. Your response to this has ensured that there is now a much better shared understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. This is helping you to identify where classroom practice is not of a high enough quality to ensure that pupils make good progress. Where this is the case, you are able to provide appropriate support.

Inspectors also asked leaders to develop adults' practice in the early years provision so children move on more quickly with their learning. Adults regularly check children's understanding through asking well-targeted questions. When children are secure in their understanding, adults then provide children with activities that are more challenging. I saw this when I visited the Nursery and Reception classes, where children engaged well with their learning and with adults' questioning. They responded well when adults provided them with more challenging problems to solve.

Pupils enjoy coming to the school. They have positive attitudes to their learning, which you have carefully fostered through your weekly celebration assemblies. They also understand your expectations regarding their behaviour. They understand the need to treat each other kindly. They also understand the need to respect the school's 'golden rules', which are to ensure that all pupils behave well. Pupils say that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. The school's records confirm this to be the case. Pupils say that when a pupil does not behave well, teachers act quickly to help the pupil to manage their behaviour more effectively.

Governors understand which aspects of the school's provision need to improve to ensure that pupils make the necessary progress to attain at least the expected level across all of their subjects. They are committed to supporting you and other senior leaders in your work to ensure that the quality of the school's provision is such that more pupils leave your school well prepared for key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders pay careful attention to the well-being of those pupils about whom they have a safeguarding concern. They work very closely with pupils' parents and with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. Leaders also make careful use of the two family support workers that the

school employs to provide pupils and their families with effective support. You and other senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that your safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. This ensures that all of the leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the support that each pupil receives.

Teachers have a thorough understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, and know the signs to look for when checking on the well-being of their pupils. They receive regular safeguarding training and updates, including on issues in the local area that may affect pupils' welfare. When teachers have a concern about a pupil, they are quick to pass this concern on to the senior leaders.

Pupils regularly learn how to be safe, including when online, when crossing the road and when out in the local community. You also ensure that pupils learn how to live healthy lives, during which time they consider the risks to their health. The pupils with whom I met said that there are adults in the school they can go to if they have a concern. They are confident these adults will listen to them and help them to resolve their concern. Almost all parents who expressed an opinion said that staff care for their children well.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have carefully reviewed those writing skills in which pupils are not yet secure. Leaders have rightly increased the focus on ensuring that pupils' handwriting and spelling improves. As a result, the proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 who are on track to attain at least the expected standard is greater than that seen previously. However, there are still too many pupils whose writing skills are not strong enough to allow them to attain the expected standard.
- Teachers have received training to help them to plan activities to help pupils to become secure more quickly in their mathematical skills. This has led to an improvement in pupils' attainment in mathematics who are currently in Year 2. However, not enough pupils in Year 2 are on track to attain at least the expected standard.
- Adults in the early years are quick to identify the prior attainment of the children who enter the Nursery or Reception Years. For many, this is often well below that typical of a child of their age. The well-targeted support that adults provide helps children to develop their skills quickly, particularly in writing and counting. Children in the early years make rapid progress to ensure that the majority leave the provision having attained the level expected of them.
- Leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils receive well-targeted support. As a result, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is beginning to diminish.
- Leaders and teachers closely check pupils' attendance, and are quick to take action when they identify any emerging patterns of absence. They are quick to provide support when this is the case. Absence from school, including the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent, has reduced due to these measures, and is now at least in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics, so more pupils achieve at least the expected standard by the end of Year 2 in these subjects
- teachers are consistently accurate in their assessment of key stage 1 pupils' learning and use this information to provide effective support to pupils whom they identify as not making good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, a selection of staff and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I observed learning in all classes in key stage 1, jointly with you as headteacher. I also visited the Nursery and Reception classes with the early years leader. During these visits to lessons, I spoke with children and pupils and looked at their work, including in their books. I also looked at pupils' books as a separate activity with senior leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour when they arrived at the school, during which time I also spoke with parents. I met with a selection of pupils from Years 1 and 2. I also spoke with pupils informally when I observed behaviour at lunchtime. I listened to two pupils read. I examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, attendance, pupils' attainment and progress, and the school's use of the pupil premium funding. I also took into account the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's recruitment procedures and records of the checks made on new staff and volunteers. I took into account the 70 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, including the 24 responses to the free-text service. I considered the seven responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the online survey for pupils. At the end of the day, I gave feedback to you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body.