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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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8 March 2018

Mrs Joanne Lloyd-Williams
Headteacher
Finedon Infant School
Orchard Road
Finedon
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN9 5JG

Dear Mrs Lloyd-Williams

Short inspection of Finedon Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 be good in September 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 and the leadership team have created a school where every pupil is valued, nurtured and encouraged to do their best. There is a strong sense of teamwork and the school is a happy, purposeful environment. Governors and the skilled staff team share your determined approach and high expectations. You respond quickly and effectively when issues arise and, together with the leadership team, bring about sustained improvements when required. For example, following a dip in the key stage 1 outcomes in 2016, you acted promptly, adjusting teaching strategies and developing staff expertise. As a result, outcomes and pupils' progress across the school have continued to rise.

Governors have a precise knowledge and understanding of what the school does well and what could be even better. The chair of the governing body, and other governors, visit frequently to gather first-hand information about the work of the school, and to offer challenge and support.

The school is an attractive and stimulating environment for learning. Pupils are very well behaved and show kindness and consideration to each other. Classrooms are happy, busy places of learning and pupils speak with enthusiasm about the exciting things they learn, and how well the staff look after them. Pupils enjoy coming to school because it offers a vibrant and enticing place in which to learn. Those pupils who spoke with me during the inspection said they feel safe and teachers and other adults are helpful.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school. Their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, commonly identify the high-quality leadership of the staff team, and all respondents recommended the school. This is typified by comments such as, 'It is obvious that pupil/teacher relationships are strong. If I have any concerns, they are addressed promptly. Both of my children are thriving at school.'

You have also addressed the areas for improvement identified at the predecessor school's last inspection. The early years and national curriculum assessments in 2017 showed that most pupils made strong progress. You sustain a significant focus on extending pupils' speaking and listening skills, thereby enabling them to achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. The work seen in pupils' books and the detailed tracking of school-based assessments confirm that your actions have successfully sustained improvements in the standards achieved by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

In previous years, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have not attended as well as other pupils. You have rightly focused on this area in your improvement plans for this year. You have addressed this successfully, and these pupils' rates of attendance have improved.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff understand and implement school safeguarding procedures effectively. All staff receive frequent and appropriate training, for example about the 'Prevent' duty, to protect pupils from the influence of radical or extreme views. Leaders work well with external agencies and know how and when to make referrals if they have concerns about pupils.

You know the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. My discussions with pupils revealed that they feel safe and know who they can go to with a worry or a concern. All parents who responded to the parent survey agree that their child is happy, feels safe and is looked after well.

Some of our discussions around safeguarding focused on pupils' attendance. The school's attendance information shows that prior to 2017, overall absence rates had risen. However, you have put in place a range of measures to check and improve pupils' attendance. This work is proving to be successful as attendance is improving steadily for individuals and for groups.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, I investigated the actions which the school has taken since its predecessor school was inspected. I looked at the progress of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils. My inspection activities also included careful scrutiny of pupils' attendance. You and other leaders, including governors, have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and of the priorities for further improvement. You and senior staff frequently observe teachers at work and check the impact of their actions by reviewing pupils' learning. You make effective use of the information you gather about pupils' attainment and progress to inform your

development planning. As a result, you correctly identify the school's priorities for improvement as well as the appropriate actions to secure success. You are aware of the need to accelerate further the progress pupils make, particularly in English and mathematics across the school, so that greater proportions achieve the highest standards in national assessments. In addition, you are taking action to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills. Many children joining the Reception classes from pre-school settings have skills below those typical for their age, especially in their social and speaking skills. You have identified this as being a significant barrier to their progress. This work is already having an impact because school information shows that most children and pupils are making good progress across the early years and in key stage 1.

- The quality of teaching is good. The committed and highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants promote learning strongly. They take every opportunity to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding by asking questions which deepen their learning. As a result, pupils generally make strong progress from their starting points and achieve well. On occasion, however, there is some inconsistency in the challenge and pace of learning between different classes and thus pupils' rate of progress. You acknowledge that more can be done to address this issue. You have plans to use the current good practice in questioning, evident in some classes, as a model to encourage all staff to question pupils effectively.
- Pupils' books, including those of the most able and those who are disadvantaged, show they are making good progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils successfully acquire a range of those skills expected for their age. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 spell common 'exception' words and use prefixes and suffixes. Books also showed that pupils use basic punctuation and capital letters for proper nouns. In mathematics, pupils' books showed that pupils were using the multiplication symbol and had been counting in twos, fives and tens.
- Pupils read well because of the support they receive from staff. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home. Pupils who need to catch up are listened to on a more regular basis, with volunteers providing additional capacity for hearing pupils read. Pupils use their phonic skills to read unknown words successfully. Pupils develop a love of reading, and as a result, the school's assessment information shows that current pupils are making good progress in all year groups. The proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standard at the end of key stage 1, in 2017, was at least in line with the national average. This indicates good progress because the starting points for many of these pupils were lower than that typically found.
- You make effective use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school's detailed knowledge of pupils' needs ensures that a tailored approach is taken to support these pupils. Pupils' books show that targeted support is helping these pupils develop their skills and make strong progress.
- You have worked hard with families to improve the attendance rates for all pupils, but particularly for some disadvantaged pupils, and some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You follow up any absences promptly and work with families to help remove barriers which may be contributing to low school attendance. While some pupils still have low attendance, school leaders are doing everything they can to address this.
- School documents show that leaders give staff clear guidance and targets on how to improve their practice. These are followed up in subsequent observations of teaching.

Subject leaders in English and mathematics demonstrate a secure knowledge of the subjects for which they are responsible. They share your commitment to improving rates of progress and have identified precisely where things need to improve in order that pupils continue to achieve well. Subject leaders work well with other trust schools to compare ideas and to moderate pupils' work.

- You ensure that parents are well informed about what is going on in school, through regular newsletters and an informative website. The website contains the information you are required to publish as an academy, as well as useful information for parents about the curriculum and the work of the school.
- Those responsible for governance hold school leaders to account for pupils' achievement. They use their secure understanding of school performance information and their own comprehensive monitoring to challenge school leaders about the impact of their work. Leaders and governors demonstrate strong capacity to drive further school improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sustain the focus on quickening pupils' progress across the school, by further developing pupils' speaking and listening skills
- they use the existing good practice in the school, so all staff question pupils effectively in order to extend their understanding.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the Irthlingborough and Finedon Learning Trust and the chief executive officer of the trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your executive headteacher, assistant headteacher and the leaders for English and mathematics. I also met with three members of the governing body, and a director from the academy trust. In addition, I spoke with a director from the academy trust on the telephone. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, and information about safeguarding. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 1 and spoke with several staff. You and I visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning, listen to pupils read and scrutinise work in their books.