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Mr Sean Taylor
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Dear Mr Taylor

Short inspection of Foundry Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2019 with Kevin Parfoot, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 2015.

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.**

Senior leaders are a united team, who all share a clear vision for pupils to achieve their best in the school. Along with the deputy headteacher, you point out many of the strengths of the school, but have an overly positive view of some of the improvements that have taken place. Senior leaders do not always fully recognise some of the weaknesses in the school, so their evaluation of the school lacks clarity and precision. As a result, leaders' and governors' plans do not systematically address the most urgent areas for improvement. Nevertheless, leaders' actions are starting to have a positive impact in some areas where there have been long-standing weaknesses.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say that this is a happy community where it is easy to make friends. Pupils trust adults in the school because the adults are mostly good at sorting out problems and do so to everyone's satisfaction. Teachers make learning enjoyable yet challenging for pupils, who say that staff expect them to work hard but are always on hand to provide any help that is needed.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many highlight the school's community atmosphere and the way that staff know pupils as individuals. One parent spoke for many when saying: 'The school is inclusive, supportive and a

joy to be involved with as a parent.'

The great majority of staff enjoy working in the school and feel proud to be part of the Foundry Lane team. Many staff praise the positive ethos around the school and how this creates a nurturing place for pupils. One staff member said: 'There is a strong culture of support for staff both professionally and personally and there are a large number of staff who go above and beyond to ensure colleagues are cared for.' Another talked positively about the school's inclusive community feel, describing it as 'a big, extended family'. However, there is a very small group of staff who are much less happy working at the school.

Pupils achieve well at the end of key stage 2. In 2018, progress in reading and mathematics was above the national average, and standards of attainment were at least in line with national figures. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been above the national average in recent years, although outcomes have dipped this academic year. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 was below the national average, and has fallen further this year in reading and writing. However, outcomes in mathematics at key stage 1 have improved since the previous inspection, successfully addressing an area that inspectors identified for improvement.

You have also tackled some other issues from the previous inspection. Senior leaders have developed tracking systems to provide a longer-term picture of pupils' progress so that any dips in achievement can be spotted and rectified. Leaders also have a clear understanding of how well different groups of pupils are achieving, and use this information to provide support to enable some pupils to catch up. However, outcomes in the lower part of the school are still not consistently strong, especially for the most able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Senior leaders, and governors, place the well-being of pupils at the heart of this school's work because they rightly regard the safeguarding of pupils as being paramount. Earlier this year, governors commissioned an audit of all aspects of the school's work in keeping pupils safe, to check that a strong, vigilant culture of safeguarding is embedded throughout the school. Leaders quickly addressed any concerns that were identified. They checked all policies carefully and reviewed any that needed strengthening. Refresher training was provided for all staff. Consequently, staff have a detailed understanding of safeguarding matters. They are swift to recognise and report when a child might be at risk.

Pupils feel safe in school. On the playground, they play well together, despite having a limited space to play. They have a good understanding of bullying in its various forms and say that when it arises it is usually sorted out quickly. However, some felt that bullying sometimes goes on too long before staff take decisive action. Some parents also felt that this was true. Pupils learn about how to stay safe online

and on the road, and by taking part in the school's fire drills.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on three aspects of the school's work during this inspection. The first of these was to consider how well teaching enables pupils to achieve the higher standard in writing. Work in pupils' exercise books shows evidence of the positive impact of leaders' actions to improve handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Pupils' writing is growing in accuracy and fluency over time. They write longer pieces which contain more adventurous vocabulary. However, the progress of pupils with high prior attainment is not typically as strong as pupils from other starting points. Furthermore, too few pupils achieve the higher standard at the end of Year 2.
- In recent years, the proportion of children who have reached the early learning goal in reading at the end of the early years has been below the national average. In the last three years, too few pupils have achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. This is still true this academic year. Although there have been improvements in the teaching of phonics and the early skills of reading and writing, leaders have too generous a view of these improvements. Too few pupils are ready for the greater challenges of reading and writing in Year 2.
- Next, we considered how effective leaders have been in improving the quality of teaching across the school. Senior leaders provide teachers and support staff with regular training and opportunities to develop their professional knowledge and skills. Senior leaders work closely with other schools in the local area, including other schools in the Southampton Cooperative Learning Trust. They seek out areas of expertise where staff can work alongside excellent colleagues and learn from their skill and experience.
- Senior leaders provide bespoke support and challenge for teachers to help all to be consistently effective in their work. Where teachers do not meet leaders' expectations, support and coaching is put in place to help drive improvements. Although senior leaders have provided much training, support and challenge, the quality of teaching in the school remains inconsistent.
- Finally, we looked closely at how well leaders ensure that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils mostly behave well in school. During the inspection, pupils were attentive in their new classes and were polite and well mannered. Where pupils had been assessed to have behaviour needs, staff managed these well. The school is a calm and orderly environment both in lessons and during free times.
- Senior leaders have set out a clear approach to help all pupils behave, including those with recognised social and emotional needs. Staff have had training in the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour, and they follow the policy closely. Leaders keep detailed records of any incidents and enlist the support of external agencies where needed. The overwhelming majority of staff and parents agree that the school is successful in enabling pupils to behave well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their evaluation of the school is accurate and leads to sharply focused actions
- senior leaders have consistently high expectations, so that the quality of teaching improves and thereby outcomes, especially for the most able pupils in key stage 1
- improvements in pupils' early reading skills are strengthened and embedded so that a greater proportion of pupils meet the required standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met regularly throughout the day with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss a range of topics. These included outcomes for pupils, safeguarding, and strategies to improve the quality of teaching. The inspection team also met senior leaders early in the inspection to discuss their self-evaluation of the school.

It was not possible to observe teaching at first hand, because the inspection took place on the school's transition day. No pupils were with their current teacher. Year 6 pupils were not present in school. Children in the early years were those who will be joining the school in September. However, together with senior leaders, inspectors visited classes in all year groups, except the early years, to observe pupils' behaviour and to look at pupils' work, especially their writing.

The inspection team had meetings with the four middle leaders responsible for English; eight members of the governing body, including one who contributed via speakerphone; and a group of 10 staff members representing teachers, learning support assistants and other members of the wider school support team. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime, and had a meeting with a group of 10 pupils representing Years 2 to 6. The inspection team considered 45 responses to the pupils' survey, 70 responses to the staff questionnaire and 106 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector spoke to several parents on the playground at the end of the day.

The inspection team evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents; improvement plans; the school's records and evaluations of teaching and learning; and minutes of governors' meetings. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with members of staff at various times during the school day, to test out their understanding of safeguarding arrangements.