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Mr Andrew Walker
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Walker

Short inspection of Farndon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2016, 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. From our first meeting, I was impressed by the strong ambition that you have for the pupils, staff and parents of your school. Since your appointment in September 2013, your commitment and passion for improving the quality of education for all pupils who attend the school have shone through. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and the school building itself, which have resulted in improving outcomes for pupils. You are highly reflective and through your thorough self-evaluation you have a clear understanding of where the school is strong and where it needs to improve further. You have the full backing of your staff at all levels, who hold you in high regard. Staff told me that since starting at the school, you have 'driven forward improvements at a pace'. Through your encouragement, support and approachability, teachers now 'feel empowered to climb the ladder and achieve well in their careers'.

It became clear to me, early on in my visit, that you have created a strong, family-orientated, nurturing and caring ethos in the school. Parents that I talked to during the inspection fully support this view. They love your enthusiasm and inspirational leadership. As one parent told me, 'my child loves this school and even wants to come in when poorly'.

Relationships at all levels are respectful. Pupils are delightful, polite and very well behaved. During my visit, I observed pupils with happy, smiling faces and who were keen to learn. They took the time to tell me that they are 'very proud of their school' and that their teachers make 'learning fun'. They also enjoy the responsibility that you give them as members of the school council and as 'buddies' to new pupils starting at the school.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to increase the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing. Using information and communication technology (ICT) to best effect to support pupils in their learning was also an area for improvement. Since your appointment, you have ensured that these matters have been addressed effectively. The progress that pupils make in their writing by the time they leave for the next stage of their education is now outstanding. As a result, the local authority has identified your school as an exemplar of good practice. Furthermore, you have purchased additional resources and invested in staff training to ensure that ICT is now used well to support and drive pupils' learning forward.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and all your staff place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe in school. Pupils told me that they feel very safe in school and parents endorsed their views. The school site is secure and the identity of visitors is checked very closely. All staff have received safeguarding training, including training in the Prevent duty. As a result, they have a good understanding of the indicators of abuse and talk with some confidence about how to protect children from risks such as extremism, radicalisation and female genital mutilation. They are also familiar with part one of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Staff who take responsibility for safeguarding and recruitment are trained at an appropriate level. The single central record is compliant and the safeguarding policy contains all the required detail. It is fully accessible both to parents and staff.

Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of safety as it features prominently in the curriculum. Visitors come into school to highlight pupils' awareness of the dangers of taking drugs and being dependent on alcohol. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying and of keeping themselves safe while online.

Inspection findings

- You lead with confidence and by example, providing strong and effective leadership. There is a clear determination at all levels in the school to ensure that each child will achieve his or her full potential.
- You keep a very close eye on the quality of teaching. You hold teachers to account and support their ongoing professional development through an effective performance management system. There is also a structured peer-coaching system in place which further enhances teachers' skills. Opportunities are also available for teachers to observe best practice at other schools locally.

- You ensure that the performance of the teaching assistants is managed with the same rigour as that of teachers. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable, well deployed and a valuable asset to your school.
- Children make good progress in the early years provision. During the inspection, you and I observed phonics (the sounds that letters represent) teaching which was active and fun. We saw children identifying words such as 'slow' and 'snow' with confidence, while younger Nursery children were eagerly identifying words beginning with the initial sound 'z'. However, at times, the noise levels were too high, which interrupted the flow of learning. We both agreed that the organisation of phonics teaching needs to be reviewed to ensure that pupils' learning is more effective. Furthermore, we are both of the opinion that there is more to do to promote children's reading and mathematical skills by the time they leave Reception.
- Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. However, from observing lessons, looking at samples of pupils' work and listening to pupils read, we agreed that those pupils who grasp new concepts quickly in reading and mathematics are not given enough challenge to deepen their learning. You are well supported by middle leaders, particularly in the core subjects, whose roles are well embedded. However, the roles of those leaders who manage foundation subjects are not as well developed.
- Although the number of disadvantaged pupils that attend your school is low, careful thought and consideration are given to ensure that the funding to support them is spent wisely. This allows these pupils to participate in all that the school has to offer. The school's tracking information shows that this group of pupils achieve as well as (and at times, better than) other pupils in the school.
- You and your staff have redesigned the school's curriculum to excite pupils' passion for learning. Topics are linked to pupils' interests and enhanced by an exciting range of enrichment activities. For example, to give pupils an appreciation of what it was like to live in Victorian times, everyone dressed for the part and pupils experienced what it would have been like to attend school in the latter half of the 19th century.
- You have taken effective action to improve attendance, which is now above the national average. You monitor the attendance of groups very closely and stringent procedures are in place to support those families whose children are reluctant attenders.
- The support you have received from educational consultants has been pivotal in supporting you to make rapid improvements.
- Parents consider the school's website to be a valuable resource. It is bright, well laid out, contains a wealth of information and is easy to navigate.
- Governors offer good support and challenge to you and your staff. They are proud of the recent improvements which they have witnessed first-hand since your appointment. They take their duties seriously and are deeply committed to ensuring that the school continues to flourish under your effective leadership.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics in the early years provision is organised effectively to ensure the educational needs of all children are met fully
- more opportunities are made available for children in the early years to develop their reading and mathematical skills
- the most-able pupils, at both key stages 1 and 2, are consistently challenged with work that deepens their learning, particularly in reading and mathematics
- the roles of those leaders with responsibility for foundation subjects are developed further to ensure that they have greater impact on teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and four members of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents and staff, as well as pupils from the early years provision and key stages 1 and 2 to seek their views of the school. We went on a tour of the school and visited some classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read aloud and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire completed by parents, and of the school's own questionnaire to parents.