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Mrs Alison Fischer
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Dear Alison Fischer

Short inspection of Farnham Common Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are very ambitious for your school and this is shared and valued by your staff. You have developed a leadership team across the federation between the infant and junior schools. This makes good use of the staff's skills and expertise in both schools. Along with a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the federation, this ensures that pupils make faster progress across all areas of learning. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well. They know that the most able pupils in some classes would benefit from a greater level of challenge in their mathematics lessons. Along with your deputies, you look closely at the progress that groups of pupils are making and identify what actions are needed to make things even better. The plans you have to improve the school further are clear because you are explicit about what success looks like.

Governance is exceptionally strong. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and keep the best interests of the pupils at the heart of what they do. They are meticulous in checking that leaders are doing their jobs well.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the positive impact you have had since becoming the executive headteacher. One parent said: 'I can't fault this school. My son is happy and doing really well.'

Children say they love coming to school. They say they enjoy lessons because they are 'challenging and fun', and that 'teachers make learning exciting'. One pupil commented on the wide range of experiences she enjoys at school, from learning

about life during the Second World War to welcoming a circus into school as part of a community event. She accurately reflected the very positive attitude to learning that is at the heart of this school.

You have made sure that the curriculum is broad and engaging for all pupils. The Year 3 Stone Age 'Great British Bake Off' menus made the period of history very accessible to pupils as they devised particularly gory dishes. Pupils also participate in a wide range of activities and clubs run by school staff and external companies. Your lunchtime bicycle club uses sports funding to ensure that by the time pupils leave the school, every one of them can ride a bicycle safely and carry out bicycle maintenance. The school has, excitingly, earned a place in the biking finals at the Buckinghamshire school games. Trips to local places of interest, for example Burnham Beeches, allow pupils to develop team-building skills and resilience while orienteering. Pupils appreciate opportunities to develop their leadership skills by running their own clubs too, undertaking duties such as being playground ambassadors and contributing to the school council.

Leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement since the last inspection. When you took up post as executive headteacher in September 2016, you were acutely aware that the teaching of mathematics remained a weakness. You wisely appointed a strategic leader for mathematics, who has worked diligently and systematically across the federation to ensure that pupils are receiving good-quality mathematics teaching and are making improved rates of progress. Along with your leaders, you have accurately identified where further improvements are needed in mathematics, and know that some of the most able pupils need to be challenged further. Teachers now use assessment well throughout lessons to understand what pupils do and do not know. They use this to adapt their teaching well. Finally, leaders now have rigorous checking systems in place to monitor pupils' progress and achievements and to ensure that any underperformance is quickly challenged.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding systems are fit for purpose, and that records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff are expected to read and understand the school's policies and protocols for keeping pupils safe. Staff follow this guidance meticulously and if they have any concerns for a pupil's safety, these are addressed swiftly. Leaders are not afraid to challenge decisions made by external professionals, and make representations on behalf of pupils.

Governors review safeguarding processes regularly and effectively. They take this responsibility very seriously, and are passionate about ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone. All staff and governors receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of their inductions.

All of the parents who responded to the governors' questionnaire and the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, said that they know their children are safe at school. All pupils say they feel safe at school. They say that if ever they fall out with their

friends, teachers are there to help them. They say that bullying rarely happens as this is 'a safe school' where it is 'easy to make friends'. They state that teachers always listen to what they have to say, and are always there to help them when needed.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked at: the effectiveness of safeguarding; the progress that pupils are making in mathematics; what impact the poor attendance of disadvantaged pupils is having on current pupils' progress and what steps you are taking to improve this; and what steps you have taken to improve the progress boys make in English.
- Leaders are committed to the school being a centre of excellence for mathematics in the near future. The strategic lead for mathematics is successfully driving improvements in mathematics across the school. She provides valuable training, support and challenge for teachers and support staff. As a result, mathematics teaching is improving and pupils are making much faster progress. They are on track to achieve outcomes at the end of the year that are at least in line with national figures.
- With the strategic lead for mathematics, you are working to ensure that pupils who are capable of achieving the higher standards in mathematics are provided with more opportunities to work at greater depth in every class. Some teachers have a consistent focus on routinely providing extra challenge and extension tasks. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were investigating the angles of shapes they had made with masking tape on their tables. They used protractors to start off with, but then were encouraged to work out the missing measurements using the mathematical knowledge they had. Some pupils extended their learning further by providing proof of their results.
- You make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. You carefully monitor their progress. They are making good progress in their mathematics because of the targeted support they are receiving. Teachers prepare additional resources with care to support pupils with specific learning needs well.
- You are working hard to make sure that pupils are in school regularly. Your attendance team provides consistent support and challenge to families who don't ensure their children get to school. You know that pupils who are frequently absent are missing out on their learning and your team works hard to improve this. You monitor any absence closely and are developing your use of 'structured conversations' with parents, particularly for those pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium. Diligent monitoring by a link governor ensures that 'no stone is left unturned'. You are rightly planning further work to improve the attendance of pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium.
- You have analysed the different outcomes achieved by boys and girls in reading, writing, grammar and spelling, and are doing a lot to promote these areas across the school. You and your staff work hard to engage boys more with English by providing teaching based around high-quality texts and encouraging a love of

reading and writing in all areas of learning. For example, energetic teaching in Year 5 engaged boys in writing vivid and creative tales based on Greek legends, which were read out and edited by other pupils.

- Year 5 and 6 boys told me how much they enjoyed reading, and that the library in school was stocked with very good texts. They visit each week and were very keen to talk about their favourite authors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to accelerate the rates of progress in mathematics for all pupils, with a focus on improving outcomes for the most able in every class
- they improve the attendance of pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium grants so that it is at least in line with other pupils in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Varnom
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteachers of both schools in the federation (one of whom is the strategic lead for mathematics), the strategic leadership team and four governors, to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also had a meeting with the school's business manager. Together with the school's deputy headteacher, I walked around the school to observe learning in a number of classrooms. I spoke to parents and pupils and scrutinised learning in a number of pupils' books alongside your assessment information. I accessed different types of writing from boys, and listened to a number of them read out their compositions. I reviewed a range of documents including: the school's self-evaluation and development plan; the school's pupil premium strategy; individual pupils' and cohort progress records; records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, including current evaluative reports from governors; and information about the school's curriculum.

I looked at 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 staff survey returns. I also considered the responses of 39 pupils to Ofsted's pupil survey. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.