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Mrs Suzanne Tryner
Farmilo Primary School and Nursery
Woburn Road
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Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
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Dear Mrs Tryner

Short inspection of Farmilo Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017, 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 July 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 were the headteacher at the time. You have provided strong leadership since then, along with governors and senior leaders, which has built on strengths and successfully tackled the areas for improvement. Parents, children and staff are overwhelmingly happy with the quality of education and safety at your school. It was frequently described as a 'family school' where the values 'Imagine and believe, inspire and achieve' are brought to life by an exciting range of experiences for the children. For example, during the inspection day, Year 6 children reacted quickly to the sound of a Second World War air raid siren by hiding quietly under the tables and emerging later with their 'identity cards'. It is experiences such as this which bring their learning to life. As one Year 6 pupil put it, 'I wish there was a secondary Farmilo.'

The pupils' conduct continues to be excellent. In lessons, they are attentive and keen to do well. Each class has identified a rota of leaders who are able to take charge of some of the classroom organisation. These include leading a line in the early years or meeting and greeting visitors in the older classes. Pupils are confident and knowledgeable about their learning and the care they receive from the school. As a result, they feel that Farmilo is their school and they are proud to be a part of it.

Governors are also extremely knowledgeable because they visit often and get truly involved in the monitoring and decision making in the school. They are proud to be

Farmilo governors but not complacent, continuing to challenge when they notice any slips. Their challenges are effective because they have an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses. School leaders support governors by ensuring that there is a rigorous approach to monitoring and staff training which has underpinned the improvements seen up to 2017.

There is still more improvement possible and school leaders are keen to make sure it happens. For example, you know that some of the improvements seen in the 2017 results need time to become embedded so that results continue to rise. You and your governors were also disappointed in the 2017 results for reading at the end of Year 6 and have already set to work to find out reasons and ensure that this does not happen again.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have detailed knowledge of the pupils in your school. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have ensured that all staff and governors are trained and know what to do if they are concerned about a child. Recruitment procedures are secure and the safeguarding policy is detailed and up to date.

Pupils say that they feel safe and know what to do if they need help. Parents agree, both face-to-face and in parent surveys. One parent told me that she had moved back into the area so that her child could attend Farmilo. Another wrote that her son 'feels very safe and secure and trusts all the staff with everything in his life'. There are almost no exceptions to views such as these. Pupils have been taught how to keep themselves safe. Even the younger key stage 1 pupils could explain how they stay safe on the internet.

The school buildings have been prepared and extended over the summer in readiness for an increase in pupil numbers. The grounds are larger but still provide a stimulating and familiar environment where children can learn and play safely.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, the approach to mathematics teaching has changed. School leaders have researched the 'Shanghai' methods and invested in intensive staff training. Teachers now emphasise deep understanding of mathematical concepts and techniques, consistently supported by practical experience and pictorial representation. Pupils clearly enjoy learning about mathematics – particularly the 'deeper understanding' (DU) challenges which develop their reasoning, problem solving and communication. As a result, pupils are now making better progress in their learning. In 2017, the most able pupils in Year 6 reached the highest standards in greater numbers than the national average. This is the first time this has happened. Leaders are confident that this step change in learning in mathematics will continue.
- Leaders and governors have been alert to the attainment of those pupils who are vulnerable or who joined Farmilo with a low starting point. Their attainment in

the past had been below national averages and was a concern, particularly in writing. This improved in 2017, and leaders are now able to show that the lower-attaining pupils are making progress similar to that of their classmates. Staff are now responding much quicker when pupils are struggling with their learning, usually on the same day. They believe that this is making a difference. Current progress information supports this view. Handwriting is a strength and is taught very effectively. Pupils understand how well they are writing and what they need to do to improve – another strength linked to the quality of teacher feedback and assessment. As with mathematics, these improvements for vulnerable learners are recent in 2016/17 and need time to become embedded.

- Although attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been a longstanding priority, attainment in science had lagged up until 2016/17. School leaders had noticed this, prompted by the local authority, and had introduced a more robust approach to science teaching and assessment in 2016/17. This led to much improved outcomes in 2017 for Year 6 and Year 2. Attainment is still below national averages for science but is improving strongly in the younger year groups. Teachers are becoming more confident about the standards expected in science and how to stimulate an investigative approach in pupils.
- A few years ago, leaders were taken by surprise when a year group of children starting in the early years were unusually weaker than previous cohorts. The numbers reaching a good level of development in 2015 fell sharply. Leaders responded quickly, challenged by governors. A more rigorous approach to assessment was introduced alongside the new approach to mathematics teaching. As a result, outcomes improved in 2016 and again in 2017. During the inspection, the youngest children were seen fascinated and paying careful attention to their teachers and learning letters and numbers with enthusiasm. Standards have risen nationally over this period, setting the bar even higher – outcomes in 2017 for Farmilo children were close to national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build upon the successful developments in 2016/17 to embed good practice and further improve outcomes for all groups of children in reading, writing, mathematics and the wider curriculum
- they urgently establish and address the reason why there was a fall in the percentage of Year 6 children reaching the expected standard in reading in 2017
- they further improve assessment of ongoing progress and attainment in reading so that pupils make the good progress recently seen in writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I considered evidence from a range of sources, including:

- examination of the previous inspection report and areas for improvement
- performance information from 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014
- the school's website
- the most recent Ofsted report for the local authority
- a media search
- relevant school policies and procedures
- the school's most recent self-evaluation and improvement plan
- records of monitoring activity by school leaders
- discussions with school leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils
- evidence in pupils' books and observation of learning in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2
- the single central record and teacher recruitment information
- staff training records and safeguarding record-keeping systems
- surveys of parents, staff and pupils and observations of pupils' conduct in lessons and around school.