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Mrs Sally Robins  
Headteacher  
Faringdon Infant School  
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Dear Mrs Robins

### **Short inspection of Faringdon Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 February 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, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, acted swiftly after joining the school in September 2017 to provide continuity and stability. Parents and staff appreciate the vision and direction brought by your leadership and the positive changes you have made. A parent commented that: 'Faringdon is a fantastic school which is particularly thriving under new leadership.'

You have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. With the support of the Faringdon Academy of Schools, you are implementing well-considered continuing improvements. The academy offers useful and relevant training for staff from specialists. Leaders and teachers value the continuing professional development they receive because it strengthens their skills and knowledge. You acknowledge that further work is needed to strengthen leadership capacity by developing the skills and roles of middle leaders.

The recently re-formed governing body is strongly committed to improving the school further. Governors hold senior leaders to account well for the school's performance, through rigorous questioning. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. Importantly, they know what is working well and what leaders must do to improve the school further.

There is good evidence that leaders' robust approach to improving pupils' reading is having a positive impact. There is now a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school and pupils successfully use what they have learned to

help them develop their reading skills. Your own expert coaching and modelling of the teaching of phonics to teachers, along with helpful external support, have ensured that staff are well trained to deliver phonics effectively.

Assessment systems and the monitoring of pupils' progress in English and mathematics have been developed well. You hold teachers closely to account for the achievement of pupils in their care. You have rightly identified the continuing need to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. While early improvements are clearly evident, you recognise there is still more to do.

Pupils' attendance is slightly below national averages. Leaders keep a close watch on this and intervene effectively when pupils are in danger of falling below acceptable levels of attendance. Your highly individualised approach raises the importance of regular attendance directly with families. This is beginning to have a positive impact. Close contact with outside agencies helps to ensure that pupils who are not in school are safe.

You ensure that pupils' personal development is well supported. Leaders' good management overcomes any difficulties which may arise from the split site arrangement. Adults set a good example and ensure that the atmosphere around the school is purposeful and routines are well established. As a result, pupils are friendly and happy, and clearly enjoy their learning. During my visit, in classes and on the playground, the behaviour of the pupils was positive and respectful. Parents and carers are full of praise for the school and a parent reported that: 'The school is not only concerned with the child's academic achievement but also their social and emotional well-being and development.'

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and to ensure that punctuality improves. Your careful checks ensure that teaching is continually improving, and that targeted support is put into place where needed. Punctuality is improving and forms part of the thorough and careful work you are doing around attendance.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team and the Faringdon Academy of Schools have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors and officers of the academy check that all statutory checks on employees are thoroughly undertaken. You have quickly got to know the school's pupils and families well and have a helpful visible presence around the school. You are tenacious in ensuring that correct and beneficial support is made available for the most vulnerable pupils. You act promptly on information you receive, working closely with the relevant agencies and other professionals to protect pupils. Record-keeping is extensive and detailed. Efficient systems help ensure that information is effectively collated, and there is a clear and constant awareness of the chronology of any concerns. This supports leaders when making decisions about the best course of action to take in individual cases.

Pupils report that they can talk to any member of staff if they have concerns and are confident these will be resolved satisfactorily. Pupils have a sound knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. There is useful information for parents on the website and in the school's regular newsletters about how to help children keep safe online.

Staff are suitably trained and very aware of their responsibilities and the procedures to safeguard pupils. There is a dedicated culture of vigilance and care for all pupils. Parents are confident their children are safe and well looked after at school. One parent commented: 'The children are very well cared for. Every member of staff knows everyone's name and for a large school it has a small school community feel.'

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the effectiveness of teaching in the early years; provision for the most able pupils and provision for those who are disadvantaged.
- The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year has risen in the last three years, although it remains stubbornly below the national average. The school's current assessment data and children's work show that they are now making good progress. This is because of the high quality of teaching and the well-targeted support children are receiving.
- Standards of reading are improving. The new approach to the teaching of phonics means that pupils are able to sound out letters confidently. Pupils demonstrate resilience and determination to improve their reading. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the progress their children are making in this area. They value the useful sessions provided by the school to help them understand how to support their children at home. As a result, pupils are making rapid progress.
- You have rightly identified that you want more pupils to achieve the higher standard in writing and mathematics. You are taking effective action to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning. Targeted teaching in Year 2 is starting to challenge the most able and extend their mathematical learning.
- Staff skilfully guide pupils to form letters correctly and pupils take care over their handwriting. Work seen in pupils' books shows that there are suitable opportunities for them to write independently and at increasing length. Consequently, pupils, including the most able, are successfully able to develop and apply their writing skills.
- The rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils is showing improvement. Leaders regularly review their strategy to see what is working well and what could be done better. Well-considered extra support provided for this group of pupils means that they are making more rapid progress.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they strengthen leadership capacity by further developing the skills and roles of year group leaders and subject leaders
- outcomes for disadvantaged and most-able pupils continue to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the executive head and accounting officer of the Faringdon Academy of Schools, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, we visited classrooms together and looked at pupils' work. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised including information about pupils' achievement, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school improvement plan and safeguarding arrangements. I listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 read. I met with the leader of early years and leaders of Year 1 and Year 2. I had meetings with the executive head and accounting officer and the school improvement adviser for the Faringdon Academy of Schools. I met with three members of the governing body including the chair of governors. I considered 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 23 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking with several parents and considering one letter from a parent.