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Miss Rhiannon Price
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Dear Miss Price

Short inspection of Fairstead Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. This fully inclusive school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere, with a strong focus on pupils' well-being and academic achievements.

Since your recent temporary appointment, you have worked proactively with governors, leaders and staff to maintain and further develop school improvement. You are ensuring that teaching and learning, and the progress that groups of pupils make, are more robustly monitored and evaluated by leaders and governors. I observed how you, the deputy headteacher, governors, and the new headteacher appointed for September 2019, are working effectively together to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

All parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, indicated that their children feel safe and are happy in school. Most would recommend the school to other families. Parents specifically praised the way staff support vulnerable pupils and meet their individual needs. Staff indicated through their online questionnaire that they are proud to work in the school.

Pupils told me they enjoy coming to school and that learning is fun. They form good working relationships with each other and adults. Pupils take pride in their work, which is neatly presented. They know about British values and talked confidently about democracy and the importance of the suffragette movement. Pupils understand the importance of showing respect to everyone and the need to 'treat

people how you want to be treated'. They are well aware that they should not give out personal details when using the internet.

An effective focus on improving pupils' behaviour also promotes their 'readiness to learn'. Staff and pupils indicate that behaviour is improving. Those who spoke to me said that there is little bullying. Any incidents that occur relate to fall-outs at the time. Pupils are confident that they can discuss any concerns with staff, who deal with issues effectively. I saw no disruption to pupils' learning during the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have addressed the identified next steps effectively. Leaders ensure that teaching and learning across the curriculum throughout the school are good and that teacher assessment is accurate. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to provide exciting lessons with many effective cross-curricular links, especially in science. For example, pupils apply mathematical skills when investigating boiling and melting points, and linking rates of evaporation with temperature. The school's assessment system shows that children in the early years make good progress, often from low starting points. The school has an exceedingly high rate of pupils arriving and leaving throughout the year. This affects the progress pupils make in most year groups. Everyone ensures that new pupils settle into school life quickly and confidently.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's designated leaders and governors have developed an effective culture for safeguarding pupils. They ensure that safeguarding documentation and protocols are of the highest quality and are fit for purpose. The single central register is compliant and securely maintained. Staff are appropriately checked before working at the school, and receive regular safeguarding training.

Pupils with complex behavioural, social, emotional and academic needs are well supported by highly trained staff, within the school's 'learning den' and 'hub'. Adults support these pupils well, to help them remain in mainstream education wherever possible. When required, leaders and governors follow the correct exclusion procedures.

Leaders and governors monitor pupils' attendance carefully and have increased parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of attending school regularly. Attendance is improving and closing the gap to the national average, but there is still too much persistent absence. Most pupils want to come to school, and talk enthusiastically about gaining money for the class bank through high attendance.

Inspection findings

- To confirm whether the school continues to provide a good quality of education, I investigated how leaders are improving the progress pupils make in reading and writing throughout key stage 2. This is because published performance information shows that, in 2018, the progress pupils made from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 declined from being in the top 20% nationally in 2016 and

2017, to being in the bottom 20%. Additionally, writing progress has continuously declined since 2016.

- The deputy headteacher explained how the characteristics of this cohort and the high mobility of pupils affected these results. To address these issues, leaders and teachers have implemented focused projects to raise pupils' achievement in reading and writing across the school. With the deputy headteacher, I confirmed the positive impact of these projects during learning walks throughout the day.
- Evidence in pupils' books and assessment information indicate that pupils have made good progress in reading and writing from their September starting points. A new library and high-quality class texts are supporting pupils' enjoyment of reading. Pupils are able to read and understand texts that are difficult but appropriate for their age. For example, Year 4 pupils enthusiastically discussed an extract from 'Beowulf', while considering the meaning of new vocabulary. Year 5 pupils reviewed a descriptive text, before using personification and alliteration in their high-quality writing about rainbow trout. Writing for a purpose, through effective cross-curricular links (including about conservation and reducing the use of plastics), is improving pupils' writing skills.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore how leaders are diminishing any gaps between different groups of pupils in key stage 1, and improving outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This is because in 2018, by the end of Year 2, disadvantaged pupils did less well than the others and there were some gaps between boys' and girls' achievement. Additionally, Year 1 phonics results have been below the national average for the past two years.
- Key stage 1 teacher assessments and the evidence in pupils' books indicate that most pupils have made good progress from September, including among disadvantaged pupils and both boys and girls. Effective support is put in place for pupils who are underachieving, including disadvantaged pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils can read the texts that they discuss, which are used to support their writing. This was the case when Year 2 pupils enthusiastically researched information about a caterpillar. These pupils have many opportunities to write independently at length, to develop their skills. In mathematics, pupils enhance their understanding through a clear focus on arithmetic, pictorial representation and the use of mathematical equipment.
- The teaching and learning of phonics in Reception and key stage 1 are strong. Additional adult support in Year 1 enables pupils to work in small groups, which enhances the progress they make. The deputy headteacher and I observed teachers and teaching assistants in Reception and Year 1 encouraging pupils to pronounce sounds correctly when they segmented and blended words. Year 1 pupils understand technical vocabulary such as 'trigraph' and 'split digraph', and can give examples. Pupils who read to me used their phonological knowledge to support their reading.
- My final line of enquiry was to investigate how leaders are improving teaching and learning across the curriculum throughout the school. This was an area to develop at the previous inspection. In a short time, you have improved leaders' expertise and accountability. Leaders spoke positively about the recent staff meeting where they began to look more closely at the curriculum skills pupils

should have by the end of each year. However, there is still work to be done.

- Effective professional training in their areas of responsibility enables leaders to use a variety of strategies to improve their effectiveness. The early years and key stage 1 leaders ensure a smooth transition from Reception to Year 1, so that no learning time is lost. This addresses a concern raised at the time of the previous inspection. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that teaching and learning meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities within and beyond the classroom. The mathematics leader is improving pupils' arithmetic and reasoning skills, so that pupils can work out word problems quickly and accurately, as seen when Year 6 pupils completed difficult shopping calculations.
- Leaders work effectively together. They moderate pupils' work within school and with other staff within the locality, to ensure that teacher assessment is accurate for all year groups. They check this matches the work in pupils' books.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the planned curriculum review ensures clear progression of pupils' skills throughout the school to ensure that they make good and better progress over time
- attendance continues to improve and fewer pupils are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, governors, and senior and middle leaders. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documents, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. Additionally, I examined policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. I visited classrooms in the school with the deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. I took account of the views of 15 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with the written views of eight parents from the free-text service. I also looked at the online questionnaire responses from 18 staff members and two pupils.