

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 September 2018

Mrs Emma Titchener
Headteacher
Findern Primary School
Buckford Lane
Findern
Derby
Derbyshire
DE65 6AR

Dear Mrs Titchener

Short inspection of Findern Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that pupils achieve well by the time they leave Findern Primary School. In 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 exceeded that seen nationally. Very early, unconfirmed, information indicates that this looks set to continue in 2018.

You have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve the school further. You, and your leadership team, use this understanding to plan for improvements carefully. This is evident, for example, in the improvements seen in reading over recent years. You and your team have introduced new approaches to teaching reading. You have provided training for staff in teaching phonics effectively. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has risen year on year. In 2017, almost every pupil achieved the expected standard in reading by the end of Year 6 and more than one third achieved the higher standard. Provisional, unconfirmed data indicates that an even greater proportion of pupils achieved the higher standard in reading in 2018.

At the time of the last inspection you were asked to ensure that teachers provide suitable challenge for pupils in writing and provide the least able pupils with work that helps them make good progress. You were also asked to strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders play a greater role in school improvement and governors make systematic checks on the school's work.

Since that time, you have introduced new arrangements for subject leadership. Teachers work together in teams to oversee the leadership of subjects. They check the progress pupils are making. They have provided opportunities for staff to work alongside each other to improve their teaching. Leaders have introduced a new system for teaching spelling. Teachers introduce new topics through activities that are designed to inspire pupils. For example, hiding time capsules around school. Pupils' books show that teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to write at length and they do so to a good standard. During our tour of lessons, we saw that teachers use their strong subject knowledge to good effect to enable pupils to improve their writing.

Minutes of governors' meetings show that they ask questions of leaders. Since the last inspection, several governors have left and new ones have been appointed. An almost completely new board of governors has formed over the last year or so. They bring a range of useful skills to the role. Although the governing body is relatively new, they have already been coming into school to see it in action for themselves. When it is appropriate, governors attend training alongside staff. Governors are committed to the school. However, they are not yet ensuring that they make full use of their skills to formalise their monitoring so that they can hold leaders to account with rigour.

Even at this early stage in the school year, teachers have established clear routines and high expectations of pupils. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations. During our tour of the school, we saw pupils fully engaged in the learning activities that teachers had provided. Every pupil I spoke with told me they like school. They particularly like their teachers and being with their friends.

In lessons, teaching assistants provide pupils with useful support, enabling them to work alongside their peers. Pupils behave well in lessons. They collaborate well with their peers and respond to instructions given by adults without fuss.

Pupils told me that they can enjoy a wide range of activities at school. They enjoy the forest school lessons where they have lessons outdoors. You and I visited one of these lessons and saw pupils working collaboratively together, using their knowledge of grid references, to solve a treasure hunt. Staff provide a range of clubs, such as football, goal ball, cricket, sewing and choir for pupils to enjoy. Pupils proudly told me that they had represented the school at a recent 'Young Voices' event. This is a mass choir of schools from around the region.

Staff ensure that pupils are gaining an understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils spoke respectfully of people whose lifestyles or beliefs may be different to their own. They raise money for charities and visit the village hall to take part in events involving children from a nearby nursery.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. You make sure all the appropriate vetting checks take place when someone starts working or volunteering

at the school. You provide staff with up to date training in safeguarding. They know how to raise concerns about a child's welfare should one arise.

You and other senior staff with responsibility for safeguarding make sure that records are well kept and secure. You are prepared to seek the services of external agencies where this may be helpful to a child or their family.

Pupils spoke to me knowledgeably about how to stay safe when they use modern technology. Teachers ensure they learn about other aspects of safety such as stranger danger or how to cycle safely on the roads.

Pupils told me that bullying is very rare at Findern. They said that adults in school would help them if they had any worries. The 'FAB Team' of pupils (Findern Anti-Bullying Team) check the 'friendship bench' so they can help any peers who might need support.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is small in each year group. Nevertheless, leaders plan carefully for the spending of this funding so that pupils can achieve well. Rates of attendance of disadvantaged pupils rose last year so that this is now above the national average. The rate of exclusions has fallen. There were no exclusions in the last year. Other pupils, such as those who speak English as an additional language, are helped to fit into school life and to gain the skills they need to help them succeed.
- You and your subject leaders have rightly identified that fewer pupils achieve the higher standard in writing and mathematics than do so in reading. The improvements that have been made to the teaching of reading have paid dividends. Teachers have made improvements to the curriculum and the plans for improvement this year include a focus on pupils' speaking and listening skills to further improve writing. However, sometimes in lessons, although teachers provide pupils with different levels of challenge for their work, they are not making effective use of their knowledge of what pupils know, understand and can do in order to ensure that they provide pupils with work that is just at the right level for them to maximise their learning. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- You will be leaving Findern Primary School in October. The deputy headteacher has previously had experience of the role of acting headteacher. Governors have ensured that she has an additional day per week working alongside you this term to ensure she is well prepared to take on the role of acting headteacher in a few weeks' time. Governors have enlisted the services of the local authority to help them with the process of recruiting a new headteacher.
- The majority of parents I spoke with, or expressed their views using the online survey, Parent View, said their children are happy at the school. Those parents whose children have joined the school recently commented on how well they have settled into school life at Findern. Other parents told me that their children

make good progress and that they enjoy the variety of learning experiences that teachers provide. One parent said, 'If I had to come to school again, I'd want to come here.'

- Nevertheless, a few concerns were raised during the inspection. For example, by a small minority of parents regarding some aspects of leadership. This includes communication. Over time, you have taken steps to improve the ways the school communicates with staff and parents. These steps include briefings, providing emails, apps, texts, newsletters and information on the school's website. A parent forum was started. These approaches have had mixed success and some concerns remain.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make effective use of assessment to ensure that pupils are moved on to more difficult work in mathematics as soon as they are ready to do so
- governors make full use of their skills to ensure they have rigorous and transparent systems in place to hold leaders to account
- governors ensure a smooth transition through the acting headship to a new substantive headteacher, ensuring that all stakeholders feel their views are heard, and feel fully involved and informed.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I also held a meeting with subject leaders for English and mathematics. I met with the chair of the governing body. I spoke with two representatives from the local authority. I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with pupils of all year groups in class. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning.

Together with the headteacher, I paid a visit to each class and to the forest school to see the learning taking place. We scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from last academic year.

I examined a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, information about the progress pupils make, the spending of the pupil premium

funding and the school development plan. I also examined documents relating to safeguarding.

I took account of the 125 responses to the online survey Parent View, including the 63 free-text comments. I took account of the 13 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.