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Mrs Flora Barton
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Dear Mrs Barton

Short inspection of Crowmarsh Gifford Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since becoming headteacher, you have involved staff in evaluating the school's work and shared the responsibility for ensuring successful outcomes more widely. Your recent focusing of the school development planning has supported governors and staff to have a clearer vision and sense of participation in school improvement. As a result, there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration within the school. This teamwork together with the high priority given to supporting pupils' personal development and welfare are key strengths within your school. Staff morale is high.

Pupils are well known, as individuals, to staff and each other, and staff take great care to support the pastoral development and achievement of them all. Consequently, pupils are confident, highly articulate and display very positive attitudes towards learning, their school and each other. You ensure that particularly effective care and support are offered to vulnerable pupils. Pupils and their parents expressed their appreciation of the willingness of staff to give extra time to enrich and extend learning through the wide variety of clubs, visits and activities on offer. Pupils and most parents are rightly proud of the school and all that it offers. As one parent said:

'All our family love Crowmarsh School! It has such a warm and welcoming atmosphere yet still challenges our children and encourages them to be the best they can in everything they do.'

During the last inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school, including: the achievement of children in Reception class; the quality of phonics teaching and promotion of reading skills; how effectively spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted; and the standard of behaviour. These continue to be key strengths of the school. The inspector also identified two areas for improvement. First, to improve the pace of learning and the impact of teachers' questioning and feedback to pupils. Second, to provide more effective monitoring of progress and targeted interventions to accelerate the progress made by the small group of pupils who do not make expected progress.

Leaders and governors have responded well to these areas for improvement. You and other leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching, and have provided teachers with support and challenge to refine the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils' exercise books show they receive effective feedback from teachers and use this to make improvements to their work in English and mathematics. Over the last two years, leaders and teachers have worked hard to develop the school's new assessment and tracking systems. These systems are supporting improvements in the progress that pupils make from their starting points and raising teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils are able to achieve in writing and mathematics. While the school has sought to communicate these curriculum and assessment changes to parents, feedback from the Parent View survey indicates that a significant minority do not feel well informed about the progress that their children make in school. Leaders and governors are aware that this aspect of communication to parents can be improved.

Governors are a professional and dedicated team with a detailed understanding of the school. They are kept well informed through regular visits to the school and via leaders' detailed reports of progress. Governors have been proactive to recruit new members to the governing body with skills and experience to complement the team. Together, you have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are taking appropriate actions to achieve them. You have prioritised improving the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics and are aware that there is more to be done to ensure greater consistency of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. You have improved curriculum planning and assessment in English and mathematics. However, there is more to do to improve teachers' expectations and their use of assessment in science and the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements and that there are well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. There is a culture of vigilance and the school's records are carefully maintained and detailed. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Governors are very knowledgeable about safeguarding and ensure that this aspect of staff's work is given high priority and meets current requirements. The school's website is professional, up to date, meets the government's reporting requirements, and contains a wealth of useful

information for parents, including much that relates to safeguarding and the promotion of e-safety.

Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. You recognise that some groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, had poor attendance rates in the past. The school has worked closely with parents and outside agencies to support improvements.

Bullying and discrimination are rare and pupils report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet. Pupils know who to go to should they have any concerns and trust staff to resolve them. All staff and parents agree and one of the parents told me during this inspection, 'The staff go above and beyond [in] supporting pupils,' while another praised the support that her child had received and the how well the school understands the family's needs.

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
 - the progress children make in Reception and how effectively they progress into key stage 1
 - how effectively teaching ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly the most able
 - how effectively leaders are ensuring that the attendance of vulnerable pupils is continuing to improve
 - the progress pupils make in writing in key stage 2 and the quality of learning in the wider curriculum.
- Strong leadership of early years has ensured that the high-quality provision in Reception has continued. This strength of the school is recognised by the local authority and leaders of the local pre-school provider. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of early years is consistently above the national average figure. The indoor and outdoor environments offer well-organised, rich and stimulating learning opportunities. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff, and collaborative play with others in their class. Recognising that the transfer into key stage 1 could be improved, senior leaders have adapted their planning and teaching in Year 1 to address this.
- Staff work together to ensure that the effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) helps to foster a passion for reading, and underpins the good progress that pupils make. Although the proportions of children at the end of Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check dipped slightly in 2017, this was due to cohort issues and they were still well above the national averages. Nearly all pupils had achieved the standard by the end of Year 2.
- Historically, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading

and writing by the end of Year 2 were above national averages, while the proportion of pupils working at greater depth was in line with national figures. Leaders have addressed the dip in mathematics that occurred in 2016. As a result of staff training and improved moderation of pupils' work, a greater proportion of Year 2 pupils now make expected progress in mathematics.

- Provisional performance information for 2017 indicates that key stage 2 pupils made progress in reading and mathematics in line with national averages. However, last year these pupils made progress in writing that was significantly below the national average. Leaders have identified this and are taking action to ensure that current cohorts are making stronger progress. Improved planning and assessment, together with training for staff, have resulted in a clear focus on improving standards in writing across the school. During this inspection, leaders had organised a whole-school writing day. A visiting speaker inspired pupils to write extended creative pieces of writing with a view to having them published on a website and pupils were taking pride in making their writing the best it could be. During our visits to lessons, and through our scrutiny of pupils' books, we saw that most teachers have routinely high expectations of pupils' writing. In most classes, pupils respond well to teachers' feedback to refine, edit and improve their work.
- Leaders have recently implemented a new assessment system for reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Subject leaders work with teachers to share ideas and approaches and to moderate pupils' work across the year groups. In addition, the school's new monitoring system allows leaders to track the progress of individual pupils and to challenge staff through pupil progress meetings. While these improvements have enabled a sharper focus on the progress that pupils make from their starting points, leaders and governors are aware that these new systems are still being developed. Consequently, there is some variability in how effectively teachers use assessment information to refine learning activities to meet the needs of all the pupils in their groups, particularly the most able. In addition, leaders are aware that better communication is needed to improve parents' and governors' understanding of the progress pupils make in school.
- Overall attendance is regularly above national figures and leaders' actions have improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils over recent years. Last year, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was below that of their peers. Analysis of school records showed that this was due to specific issues faced by this cohort. Leaders effectively promote the value of good attendance and take appropriate and timely action to support vulnerable pupils and their families when the need arises.
- Leaders have ensured that a broad curriculum is in place, with a wide variety of enrichment experiences and a clear focus on the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. Pupils and parents value the wealth of sporting and other clubs and activities such as cookery, football, basketball, choir and their link with a school in South Africa. However, pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not as high in science and the wider curriculum as they are in English and mathematics. Pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are not set sufficiently challenging tasks which require them to think deeply and solve problems in

science and the humanities. Consequently, although enrichment is impressive, pupils' progress is not yet as strong across the curriculum as it is in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers are more consistent in their use of the school's assessment and tracking systems in order to set work in reading, writing and mathematics that meets the needs of all groups of pupils
- parents are better informed about the progress that their children make
- all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged in science and the wider curriculum through being provided with regular opportunities for deeper thinking and the application of their writing and mathematical skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, leaders, and three members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Jointly with senior leaders, I visited all of the classrooms to look at teaching and learning. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and around the school, and had a meeting with a small group of pupils. I took into account 74 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. In addition, I considered the views expressed by four parents who asked for meetings at the end of the day and one who wrote a letter. I took into account the views expressed in the staff survey and 73 responses to the pupil survey. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.