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Mrs Laura Dodgson-Hatto
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dodgson-Hatto

Short inspection of Finstock Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 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 have very recently started in your role but have already shared high aspirations and expectations clearly to staff and governors to aim for the very best outcomes for all pupils. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the impact of the quality of teaching on pupils' progress effectively. Consequently, leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is used well to drive improvement quickly.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school, and they are respectful to one another. They know that their views are valued by staff and that they are listened to, particularly if they have worries. Pupils appreciate their learning opportunities and the help they get from the staff. One pupil said, 'They (the staff) make sure that the work is not too easy and not too hard.'

Parents and carers confirm that their children are happy, safe and looked after well. They like how the teachers and learning support assistants know their children very well. Parents are very positive about the thoughtful induction of their children as they join the school, and the ongoing care and attention paid to their needs. One parent said, 'My children have never been happier.'

Leaders have tackled well the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have introduced a new and methodical approach to the teaching of

writing. As a result, there is greater consistency in the quality of the teaching across the school. There is clear evidence in books of how you include more opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across different subjects and show pupils what good-quality writing looks like. Teachers usually provide appropriate levels of challenge through well-planned activities and, as a result, pupils make rapid progress.

You are aware that pupils' mathematical skills are not as strong as those in reading and writing. There are times when pupils complete tasks that do not challenge them, and learning slows. Occasionally, staff do not challenge pupils to think deeply enough about how to use their mathematical skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All appropriate recruitment checks are completed before adults can work with pupils in school. Staff complete comprehensive risk assessments to ensure pupils' safety, both on the many trips beyond the school and during activities taking place in the school. Governors complete thorough audits of all aspects of safeguarding. These include checks on the school's safeguarding practice to ensure that the school complies with current regulations.

Pupils say that they feel safe because they trust adults to help them deal with issues when they arise. One pupil said, 'They will always help us' and another said, 'This is the safest place.' Pupils are taught about different aspects of safety, such as keeping themselves safe online and personal safety.

All staff are highly vigilant. This contributes to a strong culture of safety to ensure that pupils feel secure and their welfare is paramount. You know your pupils well and are alert to any change that could indicate a concern about a pupil's well-being. If a concern occurs, it is noticed quickly and explored. Families who need additional support are appreciative of the time given to them and the care they receive from staff.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry agreed at our first meeting. The first of these concerned the impact of the school's strategies for improving pupils' achievement in mathematics. You have focused effectively on challenging pupils in their use and application of their mathematical skills in a wide range of real-life problems. Evidence from your school assessment information shows that pupils are making better progress than they have in the past. Pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, there are times when the level of challenge does not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently to enable them to achieve higher standards. Pupils are usually challenged appropriately, but the depth of challenge varies, and learning slows as a result.
- The second focus for the inspection was on pupils' progress in writing, particularly girls' progress. Teachers plan interesting and thought-provoking writing opportunities. Pupils are challenged well to use previous learning in their

current work in a wide range of contexts and genres. Consequently, pupils are making strong gains in their knowledge and understanding of how to write well-structured and coherent pieces of work. For example, pupils' work shows that they have significantly and quickly improved their understanding of how to develop an argument in persuasive writing. Teachers have focused successfully on improving pupils' spelling accuracy and using good-quality texts to inspire pupils to develop adventurous ideas within their writing. As a result, the quality of pupils' written work is consistently good. Girls are making rapid progress in writing, and their attainment is now similar to that of boys.

- The next area we agreed to look at was the curriculum. The strong focus on using and applying key skills in different subjects is having a positive impact on pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. This focus is also impacting well on their knowledge in other subjects, such as geography and history. The curriculum interests pupils, is broad, and is designed carefully to excite and stretch pupils so that learning is rapid. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that link subjects together well. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils developed a good understanding of the functions and structure of the heart through scientific study and by drawing the heart in detail.
- My final focus for the inspection was pupils' attendance. You and the governing body have been strong in tackling absence, particularly that of specific groups of pupils. You challenge parents robustly when their child's attendance is too low or is irregular. Leaders reinforce the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents very clearly and regularly. Leaders' strong stance and direct action to improve attendance have led to a fall in the number of disadvantaged pupils, and girls, who are frequently absent. As a result, the achievement of these pupils is stronger. You rightly remain focused on improving their attendance further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan learning that challenges all pupils at an appropriate level in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the other staff in the school. I held a meeting with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and met with representatives from the multi-academy trust. I visited lessons in each key stage and reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance, and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress and attainment. I reviewed comments made by parents and carers using the 'free-text' facility and the results on Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. In addition, I reviewed the responses to the staff questionnaire and scrutinised the results from the pupil questionnaire.