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Mrs N Sumner
Headteacher
Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School
West End Road
Mortimer
Reading
Berkshire
RG7 3SY

Dear Mrs Sumner

Short inspection of Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 2016, 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 January 2011.

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 provided strong leadership and developed staff skills effectively to ensure that pupils continue to receive a good standard of education. The school culture fully reflects the school's value statement: 'We learn together, grow together and shine together'. You are well supported by your astute and effective governing body. There is a strong vision and clear focus to make sure the school improves even further.

Pupils find learning interesting and fun because you and your staff have developed an exciting and stimulating range of activities to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills effectively. You have placed a high priority on making sure that pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve their work. Pupils are fully involved in checking their own work and are encouraged to show how it can be improved. Pupils are able to review and assess their own learning and are encouraged to support one another's learning too.

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths of the school. They know what needs to be done to make further improvements. You make sure that everyone knows the most important priorities for improving the school. Over time, you have developed the knowledge and skills of new and experienced teachers to become effective leaders. They are involved in driving forward improvements. Staff are highly motivated and all staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire agree

that the school has improved since the last inspection. They all say that the school is led and managed well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and all staff have received suitable training to help them to understand how to safeguard pupils. Records of suitability checks made about all staff, visitors and governors are accurate and contain all the required information. Recruitment procedures ensure that all staff are carefully vetted prior to appointment.

The school's religious character, which seeks 'to care for, respect and develop the distinctive personality of each child', permeates the school. You and your staff take care of pupils extremely well. Those who face specific challenges are nurtured and supported particularly well, which enables them to learn and make progress despite their circumstances. Pupils are happy to come to school. This is reflected in their above-average attendance. They enjoy learning and have positive, supportive relationships with one another. Pupils feel safe at school. All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child feels safe in school. They are confident that safeguarding arrangements work well.

Inspection findings

- There is a strong learning culture within the school. Everyone is involved and all staff agree that leaders use a range of opportunities to challenge and support them to improve their own skills. You have placed a high priority on making sure that all staff receive suitable training to enable them to deliver the National Curriculum, assess pupils' learning effectively and provide individualised and specific programmes of support for pupils. You have introduced a model of coaching to help staff to sharpen and hone specific skills, by learning from one another and sharing good practice.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in lessons. Classrooms are purposeful, calm and well organised. Interesting and lively displays provide additional guidance to pupils. Their achievements across a range of subjects are celebrated in classrooms, through newsletters and in text messages to parents and in the displays around the school.
- Planning for improvement is thorough and detailed. You involve staff and governors in checking on the school's progress and identifying priorities for improvement. You have correctly identified the most important things the school needs to do to improve. However, currently the plans do not identify how you will measure their success. Planned actions are not linked closely enough to expected and quantifiable improvements in pupils' achievement. Consequently, it is difficult to know whether the activities have been successful.

- School leaders know that standards dipped at the end of Year 2 in 2015 and boys did not achieve as well as girls. None of the nine disadvantaged pupils achieved Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. Also, the proportion of most-able pupils achieving the higher level declined. In the early years provision and in the Year 1 phonics check, boys also performed less well than girls. You have taken action to address this issue by putting in place a range of new approaches to stimulate learning, particularly for boys. There is a sharper focus on making sure that pupils enjoy writing and they have a clear purpose for their writing. You have provided pupils with a pack of individual resources they can quickly turn to if they are struggling. School leaders know that expectations need to be raised to make sure boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Governors are enthusiastic and skilled. They bring a wealth of expertise to their roles and carry out their responsibilities diligently and effectively. They check on the progress pupils make and receive suitable training to help them to understand information about pupils' achievement. They manage finances astutely, including the additional funding for pupil premium and sport. However, school leaders are not assessing the impact of this additional funding well enough. They have not checked precisely how much progress pupils are making as a result of the additional support they receive. In addition, they have not calculated whether the sports funding has increased pupils' participation in sporting activities.
- School leaders and governors have developed a clear strategy to ensure the school actively promotes British values. The strategy supports pupils' understanding and experiences of democracy and their tolerance of other religions and beliefs. Pupils' understanding of democracy is enhanced when they vote for the 'learning detectives'. They know that the person receiving the most votes takes on this role. Pupils' understanding of a range of cultures and other religions is enhanced through visits to places of worship and visits from a range of religious leaders. Pupils learn about celebrating the diverse needs of other members of the community and enjoy visits from The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and the JustDifferent charity, which aids their understanding of a range of disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised, including in the early years provision, and particularly for boys, vulnerable pupils and the most able
- plans for improvement identify measureable milestones to enable them to check regularly on the progress towards achieving the school's goals
- evaluations of the school's work are sharpened by making sure that the evidence of impact is measured.

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 West Berkshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher, your subject leader for English, staff, pupils and five representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese on the telephone. I also spoke with parents at the end of the day and pupils during playtime. I visited all classes and accompanied you on visits to four lessons. I looked at work in pupils' books in Years 1 and 2. I looked at the survey results from pupils, staff and Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and considered the comments that had been placed on this website by parents. I also considered four letters provided to me by hand from parents during the inspection. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation as well as range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.