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29 March 2016

Miss Sarah Reynolds  
Headteacher  
Shenington Primary School  
Stocking Lane  
Shenington  
OX15 6NF

Dear Miss Reynolds

### **Short inspection of Shenington Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 March 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 March 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You are a very successful leader who models the highest standards to both staff and pupils. This is a small but vibrant village school that serves its community well under your leadership. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership. They describe leadership at the school as being 'highly effective' and say that you 'know the children inside out'. The school is a safe and happy place where children are well looked after.

You have developed an aspirational culture where the main focus is on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, teaching remains at least good; in the early years it is highly effective. As a result, more pupils are now achieving higher standards than expected in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2. Current information shows that this improving trend is set to continue. Over the last two years the progress pupils made by the end of Key Stage 2, in mathematics, has not been as strong as in other subjects. You and the governors are aware that you need to evaluate more effectively your approaches to develop some essential skills in mathematics so that more pupils achieve the highest standards. The number of pupils achieving the expected standards in phonics in Year 1 was lower than expected in 2015 but steps have already been taken to address this.

You and other leaders work particularly well with other local schools, your school improvement partner and the local authority. You chair the local schools' forum where issues such as staff recruitment and sharing services have been addressed very effectively, as well as establishing a schedule of meetings for colleagues across the partnership to link up for professional development. You and the governors, with the support of the school improvement partner, dealt successfully with specific issues of staff performance.

You have recently created a high-performing team with very good morale which is passionate about improving the life chances of pupils at Shenington Primary school. Good systems to manage staff performance mean that all staff are focused on improving their teaching. You have created a real team ethos where every member of staff takes a lead on aspects of the school's work and contributes to the whole-school improvement plan. Staff value your leadership and the quality of advice and guidance they receive. In the Ofsted online survey your staff said, 'It is a pleasure to be part of such a lovely school' and 'Leaders listen to my ideas and act upon them and are willing to support my professional needs in every way'.

You have addressed both of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively.

- You have introduced a more flexible approach to using information and communication technology so teachers are able to use a variety of resources to help children learn more effectively.
- A more rigorous approach to developing the appropriate level of challenge across the curriculum has had a good impact on the teaching of reading and writing. Consequently, pupils make very good progress in these areas by the end of Key Stage 2. There is some useful work being undertaken on extending the level of challenge in mathematics, but this is not yet fully developed. The teaching of mathematics is not developing pupils' problem-solving and mathematical reasoning skills strongly. This is limiting the proportion of pupils making better progress, especially in Key Stage 2. You have identified this as a whole-school focus for this academic year and there is evidence in books that pupils' progress is improving. However, you acknowledge that this needs further attention.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Governors and leaders are committed to and successful in keeping pupils safe. There are robust procedures and thorough training for staff in place. Governors are also appropriately trained and very knowledgeable about safeguarding. Record-keeping is comprehensive and policies are regularly reviewed. As a result, pupils feel safe, know who to speak to and are clear that they are cared for well. Parents endorse this view and say that their children 'are flourishing in this nurturing and caring environment'.

## Inspection findings

- You and the governors are very ambitious for pupils. You know the school well; your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is accurate and thorough. The school improvement plan is a useful document and highlights how everyone is responsible for raising standards. You recognise that there are still a few areas of the school's work that require more attention. Consequently, the message 'excellence through endeavour' is very clearly understood by all.
- The new assessment system is now well developed and gives you and other leaders high-quality information on how much progress pupils make. You and the teachers know the pupils very well and have a good grasp of their individual needs and their achievements. This is especially the case in the early years.
- Governors are very committed to the school and are increasingly effective. The governor development plan is a useful document that highlights where governors have taken action, as well as showing what issues remain to be addressed. Governors are providing more challenge following the recognition that they did not check the progress of Year 1 pupils in phonics last year. Governors acknowledge that further training on using information in a more timely way would improve the quality of their support of, and challenge to, the headteacher.
- The improving trend in achievement evident in 2015 continues, with current pupils on track to achieve well. Pupils in 2015 achieved standards above the national average in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils' achievement in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average in Key Stage 2 and well above average in Key Stage 1.
- You recognise that the progress of Key Stage 2 pupils in mathematics could be improved and you are taking robust steps to address this. Current pupils' books show that they have a good grasp of key concepts and many essential mathematical skills. However, pupils' problem-solving skills are not sufficiently developed. This is especially the case for the most-able Year 6 pupils, who do not have the same high level of confidence and fluency in mathematics as they do in reading and writing.
- High standards in writing have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils at the end of the early years and Key Stages 1 and 2 continue to achieve as well. Clear systems to promote writing mean that pupils confidently use different techniques to improve their writing and to extend their vocabulary. They have an appropriate grasp of punctuation and grammar. A good example of this is where a Year 1 pupil used the word 'flabbergasted' entirely appropriately to describe a character in her book review.
- Pupils enjoy reading and standards have risen over time. Teachers ensure pupils learn the appropriate reading techniques and they have a wide choice of books that stretch and challenge them in all key stages.

- You correctly identified the early years as an area that required attention following the decline in the number of pupils achieving a good level of development in 2014. As a result of staff changes, teaching in the early years is highly effective. In 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of children achieving a good level of development and children currently are making similarly good progress.
- Due to the changes you have instigated, the teaching of phonics is now a strength of the early years and Key Stage 1 teaching, well integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils who did not reach the expected standard in phonics in 2015 are making better progress now and catching up.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They take pride in their work and follow the school guidelines on presentation consistently. They are able to discuss their work confidently and show what they have learned over time. Work is adapted effectively to meet the different needs of pupils. Additional adults usefully support pupils so that those with special educational needs achieve well.
- You and your staff's excellent subject knowledge is used well to challenge the most-able pupils in literacy lessons. For example, you chose an extract of a biblical text for these pupils to punctuate correctly and they rose to this challenge with gusto.
- You have developed a curriculum that excites and challenges pupils. There is effective use of the additional funding for sports so that pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents, with professional coaches in dance, tennis and football. Pupils also have access to extensive music and drama teaching; over a third of the pupils are in an orchestra or a choir.
- You and your staff involve pupils in the life of the school and value their views. For example the student council have discussed how to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, confident that their ideas and suggestions would be considered for adoption by you and the staff.
- The overall attendance of pupils is above the national average. There is no difference between the attendance of different groups of pupils.
- Behaviour around the school is excellent. Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors and will hold doors open. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are proud of their school. They play well together and support each other in class.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' skills of mathematical reasoning are developed throughout the school and especially in Key Stage 2
- governors' capacity to offer well-informed challenge and support for the headteacher is strengthened.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxford County Council and the Diocesan Director of Education for Oxford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

One inspector visited the school for one day. There were meetings with you, governors and a representative from the local authority. Policies relating to safeguarding, reports from the local authority, your own analyses of pupils' achievement and other documents were scrutinised. The inspector visited nine lessons to see teaching and learning. The 47 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and questionnaires from staff and pupils were analysed.