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Miss J MacArthur  
Headteacher  
Mortimer St Mary's Church of England Junior School  
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Mortimer  
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Berkshire  
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Dear Miss MacArthur

### **Short inspection of Mortimer St Mary's Church of England Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 December 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 November 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your strong, focused and determined leadership has brought about a number of improvements during this time. You are passionate about the school and want the very best for every pupil. The school motto, 'Believe, achieve and together we can succeed', captures your vision for everyone to be successful.

You and your staff are reflective, responsive professionals, working cohesively to enable all pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well. All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that they are proud to be a member of staff at Mortimer St Mary's Junior School. Pupils are thoughtful about their learning. They understand that they are on a 'learning journey' moving from learning to developing, securing and deepening their skills. They talk confidently about their learning and how the resources they are provided with support their learning extremely well.

Governors have recently changed the way they work by having more governor-led working groups to complement regular full governing body meetings. These help all governors to be better informed about the strategic direction of the school.

School leaders have addressed successfully the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Girls' achievement in mathematics is in line with their

achievement in English. Lower-achieving pupils apply their phonic knowledge well. The teaching of mathematics is supporting pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving activities, thereby providing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in real-life situations. New assessment procedures have been implemented effectively and teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning during whole-class teaching and in group work. Pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of religions and cultures and talk with interest about different cultural traditions. The international community foci within the curriculum enable pupils to learn about peoples, cultures and countries such as Egypt, Mexico, India and the United States of America.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders and governors ensure that there is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. All the required vetting and barring checks are carried out before members of staff take up their posts. Regular training to inform, advise and support staff to fully appreciate their safeguarding responsibilities ensures that pupils are safeguarded throughout the school day. Policies are detailed and procedures to recruit and induct staff are rigorous.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They know that fire drills, checks on visitors and lessons about, for example, road safety help them to understand how to keep safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to behave safely when using the internet and what they should do if they are worried. They are confident that if they had any problem in school, a teacher would listen and take action to alleviate their anxiety. Pupils understand about a range of different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying, racist bullying and homophobic bullying. They know what they should do if this happens. Those spoken to during the inspection were adamant that there is no bullying in school. A very small minority of pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire said that bullying does happen, but teachers are good at resolving issues.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have maintained a strong and committed focus on improving the school since the previous inspection. You have concentrated on ensuring that pupils are effective learners and are able to articulate their learning enthusiastically. Your aspirational ambition to improve the school further, so that it becomes outstanding, is palpable.
- You have ensured that all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed. You have introduced new systems to help pupils to learn, develop, secure and deepen their skills. Teachers find this helpful in evaluating pupils' learning, which helps them to understand the progress pupils are making.
- Pupils' attainment in 2016 was above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. Although progress overall in reading is broadly in line with

national averages, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is not as strong.

- You have managed a number of staff changes carefully since the previous inspection. However, this has not been without its challenges. You have a relentless focus on ensuring that only the highest-quality teachers are appointed. During a recent recruitment round, you were unable to appoint a new teacher of sufficient calibre. This has resulted in you sharing the teaching of one class with your special educational needs coordinator. This is clearly not an ideal situation, but you are adamant that pupils will be provided with high-quality learning opportunities. Governors know that the recruitment of a high-quality teacher is a top priority for the school.
- Pupils are very positive about the school; they appreciate the support they receive in lessons and the feedback they get from teachers about how to improve their learning. They say that teachers encourage them to 'never give up'. They are provided with a wide range of resources to support their learning and know how well they are getting on from the comments teachers make about their work.
- Senior and middle leaders are involved in checking on the work of the school through lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, checking information about pupils' progress and evaluating teachers' planning. School leaders work together well as a team to support improvements in their areas of responsibility and assume collective responsibility for ensuring the success of the school.
- The school improvement plan identifies the most important aspects on which school leaders, governors and staff should work. Regular reviews of the school's progress support governors to evaluate the work of the school. School leaders and governors are not complacent. They focus relentlessly on continuing to improve outcomes for pupils.
- School leaders recognise the importance of a curriculum which 'inspires pupils to learn and promotes high levels of achievement'. The work to increase pupils' engagement in learning is successful. Pupils enjoy learning about 'Temples, tombs and treasures' in Year 3 and 'Mission to Mars and beyond' in Year 5. The interweaving of subjects brings a cohesion to learning. Pupils enjoy the collaborative opportunities provided for them to learn alongside one another through discussions and learning conversations.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school and many praise the work of you and your staff in helping children to achieve well and be fully prepared for the next stage of their education. One parent reflected: 'It is wonderful to see how the school has helped my children grow academically as well as grow as individuals.' However, you are aware that there is a small proportion of parents with whom it is difficult to engage. You and your governors know that the support of parents in their child's education is of paramount importance, to enable their child to achieve well and reach their full potential. Work is under way

to find more ways to reach out to parents and help them to support their child's learning and progress fully both in school and at home.

- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not as strong as in reading, particularly for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. This means that the proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding in writing and mathematics is not as high as it should be. You are aware of this and you and your staff are checking on their progress carefully to help them to make more rapid progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils improves and the understanding of the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils deepens, enabling them to achieve higher standards
- engagement with hard-to-reach parents improves, to enable them to support their child to make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The key lines of enquiry identified in preparation for this inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of the school in safeguarding children
- the quality of teaching and how well teachers meet the learning needs of middle-achieving pupils, the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils
- the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that gaps are diminishing between disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school and other pupils nationally, and that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, reach higher standards especially in writing
- how ambitious school leaders, including governors, are and how effectively school leaders are held to account and are securing improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils
- how effectively the school ensures that pupils know and understand about British values and cultures other than their own.

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, your senior leadership team, staff, pupils and three governors. I had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. I visited five classes with you and observed learning in mathematics and English. I reviewed pupils' written work. I took into consideration pupils' views through the Ofsted written survey and a discussion with eight pupils, staff views through the staff survey results and the views of parents through the 'Parent View' questionnaire. I considered the comments placed on the Parent View website by parents. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation as well as a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.