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Mr Duncan Roberts  
Headteacher  
Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School  
Denham Way  
Maple Cross  
Rickmansworth  
Hertfordshire  
WD3 9SS

Dear Mr Roberts

### **Short inspection of Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 previous inspection.

Many things make Maple Cross a good school. The pupils I met explained with much confidence why they are so pleased about learning at this school. They like their teachers mostly because 'they help you learn in all the subjects', and 'they are kind and friendly'. Some pupils have attended several primary schools and they said that this was 'the best'. They like the fact that they are not held back if they are able in a particular subject. They are encouraged to read daily and do this well. Pupils are enthusiastic about what they are learning in class. They cited, in particular, their work on the Second World War and how they had to build some trenches to practise their art and creative skills. They said that they would like to experiment more with chemicals in science. The time allocated to the teaching of science is limited and pupils' outcomes are not good enough. The new science leader is knowledgeable and has the capacity to develop this subject. Pupils love their music, sports and physical education. They are thrilled about the numerous trips and the many other activities the school offers, such as performing a Shakespeare play to a large audience.

Parents are very happy with the way the school is led. Almost all of the 50 parents who expressed their views of the school through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) are positive about the school. A further 23 sent me

additional comments. These parents are pleased about the leadership of the school and the good progress their children are making. This visit confirms that pupils make good progress at the school, although provision for design and technology, a modern foreign language and science must be reviewed.

With the support of staff and that of governors, you have established a welcoming school community where everyone gets on well together. You ensure high levels of care and welfare to promote the well-being of all pupils. The youngest children quickly settle in Nursery and Reception. They know the school's routines and learn well. As a result, they are well prepared to learn in Year 1.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and not tolerated. They also say that any issues are dealt with quickly and that they would have no hesitation in telling an adult if they were worried about anything. Pupils use the school's 'five attributes' (positive mental attitude, risk taking, values, communication, integrity) well to reflect on their learning and behaviour.

You are providing strong leadership and a clear vision to ensure that every pupil succeeds. The best features of your leadership are:

- the excellent tracking of progress to support any pupil falling behind
- the accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning
- the good use of educational research to train staff and develop their effectiveness
- the support to pupils who are encountering specific difficulties in their lives
- the relentless effort to communicate with all parents and explain how they can support the education of their children.

With the help of your deputy headteacher, other leaders and governors, you maintain the strengths of the school and are identifying accurately where further improvement is required. You have addressed the recommendations of the previous Ofsted inspection and identified further issues when you became the school's headteacher in September 2013. Your success is particularly noticeable in the early years provision. The outdoor and indoor areas for children in the Nursery and Reception classes and communication with families about their children's progress are much improved. Across other classes, staff are successfully improving the quality of pupils' writing and boys' outcomes. Teachers understand and apply the school's assessment and marking policy effectively. There are good examples of pupils improving their work as a result.

During this inspection, parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were offered specific opportunities to meet a member of staff and discuss their children's welfare and progress. Your inclusion manager and learning support assistants know pupils well. The support they provide is well targeted to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils make good progress against their varied starting points.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The commitment to supporting others and the staff's understanding of the school's policies ensure that pupils are safe. Senior leaders are approachable and highly visible around the school. Parents and pupils know that any concerns they have will be addressed promptly. You are dealing with sensitive matters exceptionally well. Your deputy headteacher explained very proficiently the robust way in which the rare risks of radicalisation and extremism are investigated. Your staff are fully aware of what to do if there is a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The leadership team ensures that all staff and governors have frequent and relevant training. The school works well with external agencies to secure effective support for pupils. Families in need of intensive support are helped so that their children's education does not suffer at times of crisis. You do not shy away from challenging the local authority when pupils that you consider to be at risk of harm are taken off child protection or child in need plans and you monitor these cases closely. We checked some case files together and found that actions and timescales to support families are not always sufficiently clear, particularly for pupils who have less severe needs and receive early help services through the Family First Assessment. You are taking immediate action to review this with the relevant members of staff.

## **Inspection findings**

- Your use of educational research and your commitment to support staff who want to progress further in their careers ensure that expertise is up to date and good practice is shared. The three cluster teams (arts, creative, discover) promote good teaching and learning across classes and subjects.
- The positive impact of your leadership is particularly visible in your effective links with families, improved pupils' attendance and the better provision in the early years. Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a flying start. In all years, the teaching of reading is given high priority and pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Outcomes were good in the 2016 phonics screening check and current pupils are developing their skills well. The 'Maple Cross Explorers' in Reception and Year 1 provide good opportunities for children to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in a real-life context. Your strategies to improve writing, particularly for boys, are effective. Staff check carefully that topics interest them.
- The governors are knowledgeable and bring a wealth of expertise to the school. Because you provide the governing body with a clear analysis of assessment information, governors are very effective in holding the school to account. They use this information well to improve outcomes, although provision must be reviewed to ensure that pupils achieve highly in design and technology, a modern foreign language and science.

- Your improvement plan is fit for purpose and supports your aims for the school well. You have set ambitious targets and clear actions to make sure that pupils' outcomes are at least at the national expectation as soon as possible. Across all classes, you rightly want to consolidate progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are even better prepared for learning in their secondary schools.
- Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations for conduct around the school and for learning in class. Bullying is rare and taken very seriously. Pupils want to attend school. They are very keen to take on responsibilities. The many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You participate in and benefit from a wide range of local networks. The school's improvement partner is rightly complimentary about your leadership and about the way you assess the progress of individual pupils. As a result, you are one of three schools involved in the development of a county-wide assessment project. Staff respond well to external support, such as that provided by the achievement and improvement service (Herts for Learning) in the early years, English and mathematics.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision for the teaching of design and technology, a modern foreign language and science is reviewed to improve pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met a group of pupils and spoke to them in class. We visited almost all year groups together and I checked your evaluation of teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. I analysed recent assessment information about pupils' progress. I reviewed records and procedures about keeping pupils safe and about attendance. I read case studies of families in receipt of welfare support. I considered the views of 50 parents from Parent View and took account of 23

additional comments from parents. I spoke to a local authority representative.

For this one-day inspection, I investigated:

- the quality of teaching and learning at key stage 2
- pupils' achievement in writing and in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly science
- the progress of different groups of pupils, especially boys of average ability
- how well the school encourages all pupils to attend school regularly
- the quality of provision in the early years
- the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.