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Mrs Vicky Sammon
Headteacher
Shrivenham Church of England Controlled School
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Dear Mrs Sammon

Short inspection of Shrivenham Church of England Controlled School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in March 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 rightly identify areas that need strengthening, as well as where there are pockets of excellent practice, such as in early years. You, and your leaders, know the school, your pupils and their families very well. This knowledge has helped in your successful work to improve the attendance of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The attendance of this group is now above that of other pupils in the school. Your deep commitment to developing pupils fully, so they are able to make a positive contribution to their community, is shared by your staff team. Consequently, there is a strong team spirit within the staff body, which will support the school in the changes that lie ahead, including the appointment of a new headteacher. You, and your leaders, have created an environment in which pupils treasure the values of honesty, happiness and respect. Pupils are rightly proud of their contribution to the school's caring ethos.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and display positive attitudes to learning. They were keen to tell me about pieces of work they had completed, and demonstrated pride in their achievement. Pupils work well together. For example, when I observed Year 6 pupils discussing a fraction problem, they listened to each other intently, and thoughtfully responded to their classmates' comments. Pupils behave well in lessons, especially when the tasks their teachers set challenge them fully. The school provides a wealth of activities and

experiences, as part of their wider curriculum. Pupils and parents appreciate the additional experiences you provide, which include much-loved residential trips, strong after-school provision and a wide range of sporting events. On the day of the inspection, the school effectively developed pupils' creativity and also enhanced their spiritual, moral and social learning through a singing activity, organised in partnership with the local church.

You, and your leaders, have carefully analysed the most recent results from external tests and assessments. In 2016, the proportion of most-able pupils exceeding age-related expectations in key stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics, was well below that of others nationally. The progress of most-able pupils in writing in key stage 2, in 2016, was significantly below the national average. You have rightly prioritised these as areas for development and they are placed at the heart of your written self-evaluation and development plan. The staff team are committed to the improvements that need to be made. The changes that have been made have already had a positive impact on the progress in mathematics in key stage 1 and of high attaining pupils in key stage 2.

There is still work to do, however, in ensuring that the most able pupils throughout the school achieve the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, you have strengthened the teaching and assessment of writing and more pupils are meeting age-related expectations in key stage 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the progress of the most able pupils in writing is now an appropriate focus for the school.

You have introduced a school-wide, systematic approach to teaching science, which is having a positive impact on the standards pupils reach. As a result, teachers' assessments for science, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, are well above average. You have also raised the profile of mathematics, ably supported by your subject lead. You are rightly proud of the developments in outdoor learning, including the introduction of woodland learning for children in early years.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. As a result, pupils are safe. In particular, staff have created a very nurturing environment. As one parent who has recently joined the school community commented, 'what a warm, caring vibe the school has.' You have ensured that staff are fully aware of safeguarding issues and have rightly sent out a strong message that everyone has a responsibility for safeguarding. You have ensured that the induction of new staff is thorough. You ably lead training, which is regular and takes full account of the latest guidance. Referrals to the local authority's welfare services are timely and the local authority has recently praised your diligence.

The schools' work on anti-bullying is effective in supporting pupils' understanding of different types of bullying and how to prevent them. The pupils spoke about this being a 'telling school', where pupils are comfortable telling teachers about their concerns. Online safety is a priority for the school and integral to the computing scheme of work. In addition, pupils take part in online safety workshops which ensure that they are aware of the dangers of the internet. Parents are also offered support in this area, through meetings. You, and your leaders, are further developing the way the school engages parents, particularly ensuring that they are fully aware of the extent of your work to support and nurture pupils. You acknowledge that some parents do not know enough about the impact of your well-considered work in this area.

Inspection findings

- I agreed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection with you during our initial meeting. We focused on the progress of most-able pupils in key stage 1, and the extent to which changes to the way writing is taught in key stage 2 enable most-able pupils to make strong progress. We also looked at how well approaches in mathematics are working for different groups of pupils, the attendance of pupils eligible for additional funding, and how effective the academy trust and governing body are in supporting the school. I also considered the impact of the school's work in keeping children safe.
- To improve the proportion of pupils exceeding expectations in national key stage 1 assessments, you have wisely introduced a more comprehensive pupil progress tracking system. The new system ensures that pupils' previous attainment is clearly identified, so that you can evaluate their progress against expectations, as they move through key stage 1.
- Information from the tracking system is used effectively in pupils' progress meetings, enabling you to provide well-planned, suitable support for pupils who are not on track to make the required progress.
- Your staff now have a better understanding of assessment procedures. They are ably supported with the moderation of pupils' work by the multi-academy trust (MAT). You have set challenging targets for the pupils, which take into account their starting points. However, not enough pupils across key stage 1 are currently on track to reach the higher levels, especially in Year 1.
- Your work to develop pupils' writing skills has been largely effective. Pupils are more confident about the grammatical structures they need to employ in different types of writing. You have skilfully developed new key performance indicators that enable pupils to be clear about what is required for them to be successful, including handwriting. However, most-able pupils in key stage 1 need to join their letters to achieve at a higher level.
- Working successfully in conjunction with partner academies, you have developed useful exemplars of writing. As a result, teachers have a better understanding of the key features of higher-level writing. However, in lower key stage 2 classes, teachers do not always challenge pupils to use the

sophisticated vocabulary they have developed through their reading.

- Teaching in mathematics supports pupils' learning effectively because it provides a strong balance across the different aspects of mathematics, such as problem solving and the recall of times tables. Nearly all pupils benefit from challenging tasks at the right level for their ability. The lower-attaining pupils are well supported through 'bronze' tasks and an effective team of teaching assistants. Teachers introduce written calculations systematically and do not move pupils on to formal calculations until their learning is secure.
- Teachers' effective questioning in upper key stage 2 deepens learning in mathematics, and pupils are encouraged to reflect on how well they are learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. However, some of the most confident mathematicians considered their tasks to be too easy.
- There is a strong two-way relationship between the school and the academy trust, especially in the areas of assessment and sharing good practice. Governors value the strategic school improvement that the trust provides, as well as the more practical support with maintaining the school site.
- You have been instrumental in leading the academy trust forward by developing a new approach to assessment and tracking pupils' progress. To achieve this, you analysed research and visited a school beyond the MAT, to find best practice. The approach you devised is now embedded in your school's practice, with different versions across the MAT. As part of this approach, upper key stage 2 pupils take the lead at their learning reviews. Consequently, parents have a better understanding of their child's next steps in learning. Other schools in the trust have benefited from your leadership and advice.
- Governance is strong, led by a chair with a clear, forward-looking and inclusive vision for the school. Governors are supportive of the school, leadership team and academy trust. Through their regular visits to the school, they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They rightly seek to verify what leaders tell them by checking on the achievements of current pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the level of challenge offered to the most able pupils is sufficient, given the high starting points many pupils have
- the most able pupils achieve highly, particularly, but not solely, in writing,

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of directors of the Faringdon Academy of Schools, 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

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I undertook short visits to observe teaching, learning and assessment in all classrooms, accompanied by you. I looked at, and discussed, pupils' books with the English and mathematics subject leaders, met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to pupils about their learning. I checked safeguarding arrangements during a meeting that I held with you about safeguarding. I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's development plan, self-evaluation and attendance records. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, during which you indicated those areas that you were most proud of. I considered 54 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 33 'free-text' responses. I also considered 16 staff responses to the online questionnaire.