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Mrs Sarah Nickelson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Nickelson

Short inspection of Freeland Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in April 2016, you have worked with determination to improve the quality of education at the school. You work effectively with your deputy headteacher and members of your governing body, who provide rigorous monitoring and challenge. You demonstrate ambition for all your pupils and have successfully focused on delivering high-quality outcomes for them. You have developed a culture of high aspiration, in which you and your staff share a common vision for the school.

You set high expectations for your staff and pupils. The school is a place where hard work and positive attitudes are valued and rewarded. As a result, pupils demonstrate a desire to learn, to succeed in their work, and to improve their knowledge and skills. Pupils in classes are settled in a productive environment and their lessons proceed without disruption. You and your leaders ensure that there is high-quality teaching and support throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate maturity and independence in their approach to learning. They can explain clearly how, for example, 'the five Bs' approach – 'brain, board, buddy, book and boss' – helps them learn.

Behaviour throughout the school is consistently positive. At breaktimes, pupils socialise well together. Similarly, they work hard in lessons, readily collaborating with their peers to solve problems and evaluate their work. Pupils describe a

'friendly and happy' school where they value the experiences they receive. You successfully encourage independence, responsibility and participation in the wider curriculum. For example, you have recently ensured that there is greater pupil involvement in collective worship, with music and drama performances led by your pupils. Most parents speak very positively about the school, with one describing it as: 'an inspiring environment where children are encouraged to try their best in everything they do'.

Since the school converted to an academy, leaders have raised expectations for the most able, achieved strong outcomes in writing and reduced inconsistencies in teaching. These were the improvement areas identified in your predecessor school's last inspection report. Since your appointment, you have acted swiftly to further improve the quality of teaching, including the teaching of mathematics. You have ensured that the most able pupils are consistently challenged in all subjects. High standards in pupils' writing are evident throughout the school and you celebrate this on your 'star writers' display. Staff training to improve the teaching of mathematics has been effective. Staff value your 'buddy system' and opportunities to work closely with the leadership team, which enable the continuous review and development of their teaching practice. The majority of pupils are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics during key stages 1 and 2. Pupils also progress well through the early years, and achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average.

Previously, some pupils who have special educational needs and or disabilities have not made as much progress as they should. You have accurately identified a need to improve outcomes for these pupils. The current rate of progress for these pupils is increasing. However, there are still further improvements to be made to ensure that these pupils' progress is consistently rapid in all subjects and year groups. You have also identified that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend school frequently enough. Although actions to improve targeted pupils' attendance are well focused, the attendance rates of this group of pupils still need to improve further.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are well organised and accurate. Governors regularly check safeguarding arrangements within the school. Staff training is up to date, and staff demonstrate knowledge of how to identify and report concerns about pupils' welfare. When necessary, you work effectively with external agencies to support your pupils' needs. Internet access is filtered appropriately and pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

The school is a safe and caring environment. You teach pupils well about how to keep themselves safe. During the inspection, pupils enthusiastically recalled their anti-bullying work and discussed recent teaching about maintaining safe and healthy relationships with others. You ensure that parents are educated about pupils' safety and you rightly apply specialist knowledge, such as from the police, in the delivery of your curriculum.

Inspection findings

- I considered how effectively leaders are improving the quality of teaching, particularly the teaching of mathematics. Your leadership team monitors the quality of teaching and pupils' progress accurately. As a result, you plan effective, well-targeted training for staff. You have developed a positive culture for learning in the school where pupils take responsibility for improving their work. Teachers and supporting adults work effectively in classrooms to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. You ensure that tasks set for pupils consistently provide them with suitable challenge, including for the most able.
- You correctly identified that in the past, pupils' progress in mathematics has not been as rapid as in other subjects. You have taken swift action to address this. You have provided training to ensure that staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence to teach the mathematics curriculum well. You have ensured that appropriate resources are available to support the teaching of mathematics, and that staff understand how to use them effectively. You have also improved the mathematics curriculum, creating opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge, as well as strengthen their skills in problem-solving and mathematical reasoning. As a result, the majority of pupils are now making rapid progress in mathematics, which is similar to the very strong progress they make in other subjects.
- I looked at how well leaders are ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met, particularly those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You are aspirational for all your pupils, and you accurately identified that in the past some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not made sufficient progress. Leaders thoroughly assess the needs of these pupils and accurately monitor their progress. Training has been used to improve teachers' and teaching assistants' knowledge of how to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils' progress is improving so that it is becoming more in line with that of other pupils in the school. However, leaders need to ensure that pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified more swiftly. In addition, they should evaluate the impact of their actions more rigorously to ensure that support is well matched to pupils' needs.
- You have ensured that tasks set for pupils consistently take account of their starting points, and that teachers provide opportunities for the most able to extend their knowledge. You have ensured that teachers monitor pupils' progress accurately and, as a result, any gaps pupils have in their knowledge are closed swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils know what they are expected to achieve and they know how to improve their work. Pupils say their learning is developed effectively through a combination of teachers' high expectations and well-planned tasks, along with support from adults.
- I considered how effectively leaders are maintaining pupils' high rates of attendance and reducing absence rates for those pupils whose attendance is low.

You correctly identified that during the last academic year, girls' attendance declined and that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not attending regularly enough. You now work closely with parents to ensure that pupils are not unnecessarily absent. Pupils' attendance is monitored accurately and absences are investigated swiftly. You understand the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending regularly enough, and take well-focused action to assist them in overcoming any barriers. You have also ensured that the school environment is warm and welcoming. Pupils feel safe, happy and well supported by the adults who care for them and, as a result, so far this academic year, most pupils have high rates of attendance. Girls' attendance has also improved. However, the attendance rates for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities need to improve further to meet national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should rigorously monitor and evaluate:

- the impact of teachers' and assistants' support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they make the same rapid progress as other pupils
- approaches to improve attendance rates for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that their attendance is in line with that of other pupils.

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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Corr
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I checked safeguarding arrangements, including the records of recruitment checks, policies and procedures. I reviewed a range of published information, including the school's website, and reviewed the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I visited all classes with the headteacher, where we observed learning and looked at pupils' work. I met with school leaders to discuss the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and attendance, along with the provision for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I

observed pupils during breaktime, spoke with a group of teachers and also with a group of pupils. I also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I met with the chair and other members of the governing body, and spoke to representatives from the multi-academy trust. I reviewed records of behaviour and attendance. I considered 21 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, 42 responses to the pupil survey, 12 responses to the staff survey and a letter received from a parent.