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Mrs Jill Meyer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Meyer

Short inspection of Witney Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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 school was judged to be good in January 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 are currently reorganising your strong leadership team to develop potential and to support succession. Your ambition and clear vision to open a pre-school on-site will help you to prepare children for school and to extend your staff's skills and expertise. Some parents are uneasy about these changes. You are sensitive to this and recognise the need to communicate the benefits and increased choice that the changes will offer the community. You and your governors provide clear leadership and determination to succeed.

The partnership between you and your teaching team is highly effective. The open culture of shared learning and commitment to improve is tangible. As one staff member stated, 'We are working in a climate of a growth mindset where we constantly challenge our own professional development.' Staff value opportunities to work in coaching groups and video their lessons so that they can help each other improve. They regularly visit other schools within your strong partnerships and beyond to reflect on new ideas and methods, such as in mathematics and religious education. This inspires staff so their morale is high.

The positive atmosphere you have established incorporates your pupils, who benefit from warm relationships with adults. Classroom displays help pupils to understand how their brain works and how to grow them! At the time of the last inspection you were asked to help pupils to become independent so they could contribute more to

their lessons. You have clearly achieved this. Year 3 pupils ended their assembly singing with gusto about the benefits of this 'can-do' attitude. The school's mascot, Yeti, helps younger pupils to approach new problems. It promotes an 'I cannot do it yet!' attitude which motivates them to develop resilience. Behaviour and conduct around the school is extremely good. Sport promotes this well. Pupils compete regularly, demonstrate sportsmanship and praise each other's determination. Some of them bubbled with excitement about a Year 3 and 4 basketball competition; others built physical and emotional stamina when running the daily mile.

You have sustained good outcomes for pupils. You continue to prepare most children well for Year 1 by the end of the early years. Results of the phonics screening check in Year 1 have remained above or in line with those seen nationally. Your improvement work at key stage 1 secured strong outcomes for pupils in 2016, including disadvantaged pupils. You are ambitious for more and recognise that, despite improved teaching, progress is slower at key stage 2. Less effective teaching in the past led to gaps in pupils' knowledge, which teachers are now addressing well. Some pupils are catching up quickly. You are sensitive to pupils', especially some girls', anxieties to master mathematics. Your leaders are forging ahead to overcome this.

The curriculum on offer is broad and rich. A typical parent view was, 'There is always something new and interesting for the children, keeping them enthused and engaged.' Another acknowledged that these opportunities are 'so valuable in making them well-rounded individuals'. I shared these sentiments when I visited. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics ambassadors from the local university ignite older pupils' scientific aspirations well. A pupil glowed with pride at the honour of his experiment representing the school in a local science competition. A visit by the touring planetarium earlier in the week had inspired a pupil to raise a thoughtful enquiry in her passport, reflecting, 'Will the sun die some day?' Pupils said they appreciate these visits which make them think hard about things.

Pupils and parents said that this school is at the heart of the community. I would agree. During the inspection Year 2 pupils visited a local residential home to sing to residents and pre-school children visited the school. Everyone was excited about the forthcoming den-making day when they would be raising money for Save the Children. Recalling the pupils' organisation of Red Nose Day, a school council representative told me that pupils want to make a difference to others.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and governors conduct checks on safeguarding training and monitor regularly so that they know how well the curriculum prepares their pupils to keep safe. Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant about risks. This collaborative culture of safety continues to ensure timely intervention, reporting and productive partnership with specialist agencies. The special educational needs coordinator is highly respected for her work in the locality and supports other schools. Leaders are tenacious about ensuring referrals are followed up and the most vulnerable pupils in the school are supported well.

Pupils who spoke with me said they felt safe. They praised adults for quickly picking up on rare concerns. They understand the risks of using the internet and explained confidently why it is important not to give information out online. Some of the older pupils use social media regularly but are well aware of the rules to determine their conduct. They described a secure understanding of issues such as racism and homophobia and acknowledged the harm of name-calling. Regular opportunities to visit mosques, local churches and to listen to religious leaders (developed well since the previous inspection) have secured a strong ethos of respect among pupils. As one pupil commented, 'No matter what religion, don't assume because you are different you're right'.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, you accompanied me as I looked at: key stage 2 pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics; the attainment of the most able pupils in the early years; how well the school is securing improved teaching; the effectiveness of subject leaders; and the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation.
- Staff and leaders know pupils well. New tracking systems hold teachers to account to raise pupils' attainment through performance meetings. Teachers use assessment information effectively to deliver a range of swift interventions in class to ensure pupils falling behind make faster progress. These 'mop ups' are frequently evaluated. Pupils are fully involved. They readily ask for more help if they need it. Other interventions are regularly scheduled. For example, we observed a group of Year 3 pupils rehearsing fluency in spelling. Most pupils catch up well to attain expected standards but some middle-attaining pupils do not progress as quickly to achieve beyond these.
- This is apparent in the early years where children are ably supported to attain the expected good level of development, many from low starting points, but a few of them should attain more. Motivating characters such as 'Tryatops' and 'Stickasauros' help children to be self-confident and to manage their feelings successfully. Inspiring tasks, such as growing potatoes and wheat, help pupils to learn new things. However, the proportions of children who exceed expectations across the areas of learning are variable. Adults do not monitor this well enough. We agreed that these children do not achieve as well as others nationally, in particular in reading and writing. New mathematical resources and improved teacher modelling are ensuring that these children now achieve well in number.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved across the school. High investment in training has secured improved subject knowledge and questioning skills. Your leaders guide staff skilfully. Pupils across the school engage enthusiastically in rich discussion. Our joint visits to classrooms confirmed that pupils are becoming more competent at reasoning in mathematics. You have created more opportunities for them to apply these skills across the curriculum, so that they deepen their understanding. I saw this in the way Year 5 pupils interpreted a pie chart and were expertly supported to build on each other's ideas and spot misconceptions. Pupils appreciate the school's chosen structure of 'Do it, challenge it, solve it' which helps them to reason well.

- Likewise in English, actions to improve the teaching of spelling and the technical aspects of writing are improving standards. Pupils' work reflects increasing accuracy. Reviewing these together it was clear that you have strengthened your guidance and systems for giving feedback to pupils. Some pupils conducted a survey into teachers' marking and how this could help them better; teachers are responding well. Pupils appreciate motivating opportunities to write so that attitudes to writing are positive. For example, Year 6 pupils honed their persuasive writing skills when presenting in role as a Victorian judge a well-structured debate, in front of their teacher.
- Reading is promoted everywhere. 'Extreme reading' displays promote reading beyond school. One pupil had reflected on the similarity of a family visit to the butterfly house at Blenheim Palace to the story 'Mr Grumpy's outing!' Your successful reading outcomes by the end of key stage 1 show that you have not been complacent. More still needs to be done. Some of the older pupils do not make strong progress. We agreed that some pupils are capable of more and could be pushed on more quickly. This was illustrated in a class when pupils did not reshape their answers in a comprehension task quickly enough to deepen their initial response.
- You have built a knowledgeable and motivated team of middle leaders, some of whom are new to post. Middle leaders provide guidance to staff, but recognise the need to extend their subject-focused support further so that learning across the school sustains a strong impetus to improve. It is clear that pupils have plenty of opportunities to write across the curriculum.
- Another line of enquiry was to check out leaders' capacity to improve on the good outcomes at the end of key stage 1, and the quality of their self-evaluation. Your high expectations influence all levels. However, sometimes leaders' views are inflated and improvement plans do not sharply focus all staff's attention on the progress pupils make from their starting points. Leaders do not always focus enough on how well the school performs compared with others nationally to shape their evaluation of all aspects of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders keep a sharper eye on key stage 2 pupils' achievement so that more of them progress well when compared with other pupils nationally
- those pupils capable of exceeding expectations in the early years attain highly across the areas of learning
- middle leaders build on their current work to check on the quality of teaching in their subject areas so that attainment continues to rise.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aspland
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to review your self-evaluation. Apart from Year 2 pupils who were off-site, we visited all year groups where we observed learning. I spoke with pupils, listened to them read as they worked in class and scrutinised work in their books. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

I analysed 52 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 46 accompanying written responses. I spoke to others informally at the beginning of the school day. One paper copy of the parent questionnaire was also taken into account. I also examined the views of staff through the 17 online responses to Ofsted's voluntary survey and through discussions with some of them.

I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and I checked the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I took into account the local authority's evaluation of aspects of the school's work.