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Franco Pastore
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Dear Mr Pastore

Short inspection of Fringford Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and the governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment as headteacher two years ago, you have made significant changes to the school. These changes have been considered carefully, implemented consistently and reviewed rigorously. You are absolutely determined that pupils' experiences of school are stimulating, positive and nurturing. To this end, you have developed the school curriculum, focusing particularly on reading for pleasure. Across the school, pupils show real dedication to their learning, by answering questions in a thoughtful way, tackling the tasks that teachers set them with gusto and relishing additional challenges. Pupils spoken to during the inspection praised the school highly for the care and nurture they received and said that they felt safe. One pupil summed up the supportive culture, commenting, 'This school is a very forgiving school.'

There is a strong ethos in your school, which successfully combines scholarly endeavour, creativity and community spirit. In lessons, pupils are dedicated to achieving the best they can and participate enthusiastically. Out of lessons, pupils behave well. They enjoy playing in the extensive school grounds and respond appropriately when they are reminded of the school rules by the staff and supervisors on duty. A number of pupils, including some who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, join your school having had turbulent experiences in education to date. In addition, some pupils require support in managing their emotions. You

provide effective bespoke support for pupils with additional needs and carefully track their attendance. As a result, the attendance of targeted groups has improved this academic year, compared with last. The majority of parents expressed positive views about the school in their responses on Parent View and also when I spoke with them informally. One parent commented that the school is 'a welcoming, colourful and nurturing environment'. However, a very small number of parents expressed concerns about the high turnover of staff. Much of this has been as a result of circumstances beyond your control. You have strong plans in place to ensure that new staff settle in quickly.

You have very successfully developed the way you teach reading and created a genuine enthusiasm for reading for pleasure across the school. Children from Reception upwards are taught the skills required to be a good reader, such as prediction and inference. Pupils also achieve well above average in the phonics screening check. Teachers build on these skills well, reinforcing them when pupils read in class, including when they read non-fiction texts in non-core subjects. In addition, across the school, pupils' reading is developed by well-planned dedicated reading time. During reading time, older pupils mentor younger pupils to help them to develop their vocabulary and apply their phonic knowledge. More advanced readers have their needs well met too, through carefully planned sessions when their reading is guided by the teacher. Other pupils read books they choose, quietly or in pairs.

You have improved the curriculum and made pupils' learning more vibrant and relevant by linking it to real-life contexts. This approach has helped to improve pupils' writing and their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. You ensure that the learning that pupils undertake in both core and non-core subjects is consolidated through well-considered writing tasks. You have also provided pupils with real audiences for their writing. However, some pupils who have potential, especially boys, are not always challenged enough by the writing tasks you set. You are aware of this because you have an effective system for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. The local authority has recently visited to verify your assessments. They have found them to be accurate.

Governors oversee the school well. They have supported you in settling in to your new role well by being present at the end of the day and meeting parents informally. Governors' accessibility to parents and staff has meant they have been able to respond to any queries rapidly. Governors have ensured that they know the school in depth and have made regular visits to see it at work. They have sensibly used their visits to create a nuanced understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which they employ when holding you to account. Governors rightly acknowledge that even greater emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that staff are retained.

Since the previous inspection, you have ensured that the areas for development from the previous inspection report have improved. In particular, there are carefully considered opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to deepen their learning in non-core subjects and in science. As part of developments in the mathematics curriculum, you have trained pupils effectively so they are secure in many aspects of mental arithmetic. Pupils apply their mental arithmetic skills well

when gauging whether they have solved problems accurately.

Safeguarding is effective.

As a result of your close and diligent supervision, safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make sure that you are up to date with any relevant local and national safeguarding issues through your active collaboration with headteachers in the locality. You sensibly pass on any updates to all your staff through frequent and regular emails. Class teachers record any concerns in a class diary, which you vigilantly review on a weekly basis to ensure that they have followed them up appropriately. Where necessary, you have referred concerns to the local authority, dedicatedly acting upon any guidance they give you about further steps to ensure pupils' safety.

You have analysed the safety of your extensive school site thoroughly, taking great care when deploying supervision around the site so pupils can enjoy the spacious school grounds in safety. In order to check that pupils' safety and other aspects of safeguarding are as effective as they can be, you recently requested the local authority to carry out a safeguarding audit. The audit was positive about your arrangements. You have implemented many of the recommendations from the audit, swiftly making minor changes to the deployment of staff around the site at playtimes.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I reviewed how safe pupils feel and how well they treat both each other and adults. I also looked into how well you support pupils with additional needs, including those who join the school late, so they attend well. I explored the ways in which teachers are developing pupils' reading and writing skills and meeting the needs of all pupils, including the most able. I explored with you how effectively you are consolidating improvements made in early years and key stage 1. I also reviewed the impact of your work with governors, as well as the impact of the support you have had from the local authority and from membership of two collaborations of local schools.
- Governors are holding the school to account more effectively through their close links with subject leaders and scrutiny of pupils' work. Through your effective links with the local group of small schools known as 'Vision Learning Company', you have sensibly secured further training for governors. The training will rightly focus on governance of small schools, including governors' roles in recruitment and retention, which is an area for further development. You have benefited from your strong involvement with partnerships of local schools and worked effectively with the headteacher, who has provided support on behalf of the authority. Of note has been the way you have responded to advice, in a reflective and positive manner. This has helped you to move the school forward.
- To ensure that the best support possible is provided for pupils who have difficulties managing their emotions, you have successfully trained an assistant to work closely with targeted pupils. The support provided by the assistant builds on the carefully considered provision you already have in place to nurture pupils. For example, pupils are well supported through a special lunchtime club, where they can share

any concerns in a safe environment. Since last September, the attendance of targeted pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, has risen and is now above that of all pupils in 2015-2016.

- You have developed the curriculum so that pupils have well-planned opportunities to learn how to keep safe. For example, pupils' understanding of a range of safety issues has been enhanced by workshops delivered by a leading national children's charity, visits from the emergency services, and training on first aid.
- By providing real audiences and contexts for pupils' writing, you have ensured that their writing has a strong sense of purpose. Pupils actively seek to engage their audience through the vocabulary choices they make, which enrich their writing. However, some pupils who have the potential to be skilled writers are not always stretched enough by the writing tasks they are given.
- Of note is the way you have developed homework so that tasks are multi-disciplinary and open-ended. Tasks for homework enable pupils to apply a range of skills, including creative skills and literacy/numeracy skills. Pupils are stimulated by these flexible homework tasks known as 'learning logs'. Pupils told me that 'learning logs' were challenging, adding, 'that's what you come to school for'. The learning logs have contributed well to the culture you have established in which endeavour is valued highly. They help pupils to see the benefit in finding work hard and making mistakes.
- You meet the needs of the most able pupils well in reading and in mathematics. During dedicated reading time, the most able readers are given specially selected, challenging texts to read. They are well supported in understanding these texts because the teacher provides effective guidance through probing questioning. Pupils also have the chance to discuss their responses to the book with their peers. In mathematics, pupils with mathematical aptitude benefit from the additional challenges and the brain-teasing puzzles that teachers provide for them. These challenges enable pupils to flex and refine their mathematical reasoning skills and require them to apply their mathematical knowledge in unexpected ways. As a result, a much higher proportion of pupils are set to exceed national expectations in reading and mathematics in national tests in key stages 1 and 2 than in previous years.
- You have changed the way you group pupils, and now Reception is separate from Year 1. This has enabled the teacher to create a very stimulating environment which enables children to learn through their play. Children's learning is also supported by the focus the teacher places on reading. During the inspection, children showed how well they understood the ideas in the story being read aloud to them through their confident answers to the teacher's probing questions. They listened intently, showing they were totally engrossed in the story, despite it being a warm day and a few minutes until lunchtime.
- Pupils learn well in science and apply their understanding of precise scientific vocabulary when describing their observations from the experiments they conduct. Teachers probe pupils' descriptions to ensure that they are precise and based firmly on scientific evidence. This approach has developed pupils' scientific knowledge and skills as well as their interest in scientific phenomena.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- writing tasks are sufficiently challenging for those pupils with the potential to be skilled writers, including the most able
- governors place greater emphasis on the retention of staff when deciding upon the school's priorities for improvement.

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

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, a number of teachers who support learning in different subjects, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and one other governor. I made two telephone calls, one to a local headteacher who works for the local authority, providing school improvement, another to a headteacher from the local collaboration of small schools in Bicester to which you belong called 'Vision Learning'. I met parents informally at the start of the day, briefly observed pupils during lunchtime play, spoke informally with lunchtime supervisors, spoke with a group of pupils about their experiences of school and looked at their work. I observed teaching in all classes, including Reception. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, as well as safeguarding policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 written comments on free text. I also considered the 35 responses to the pupil survey and nine responses to the staff survey.