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Karen Sawyer
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Sawyer

Short inspection of Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet 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 Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet School was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you started at the school in April 2016, you very quickly identified areas for development and implemented a precise action plan. You accurately located expertise within your staff and provided all teachers with coaching to enhance their teaching. You have made sure your senior teachers lead on their areas of responsibility effectively. As a result, you have reinvigorated your highly skilled staff, who are now motivated and inspired to achieve your high expectations. Your governors know the school well and share your clear vision for school improvement. They have high expectations of leaders and provide an effective balance of challenge and support.

Pupils describe their school as a place where 'learning is fun and everyone looks after each other'. They reflect your high expectations for care and courtesy towards each other and they have highly positive attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well and try hard to do the very best they can. Pupils talk animatedly about the curriculum, particularly their exciting topic work. For example, some pupils were enthusiastic about work on habitats and food chains, while others said how much they enjoyed learning about the life cycle of frogs.

You and your staff place a high value on the partnership between school and home. Parents I met, and those responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about how well their children are taught and looked

after in school. One parent commented that 'the community school is in the heart of the village, where all children are accepted and valued'. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school and all parents who completed the survey would recommend the school to others. Many parents mention how much their children enjoy coming to school. They attribute this to the engaging curriculum, the positive relationships between staff and their children and the strong leadership that you have provided since joining the school.

Leaders and governors have maintained the strengths identified during the previous inspection. In addition, you have successfully tackled areas for development, particularly in English. Pupils now have more opportunities to write across a range of subjects, which has increased the challenge in writing. As a result, pupils make good progress. The proportion of pupils who achieved age-related expectations in writing in 2016 was above the national average in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. In 2016, a high proportion of the most able pupils in key stage 2 exceeded expectations in reading and writing. You and your leaders rightly recognise that this should remain a priority for development in key stage 1.

Steps to strengthen the teaching of mathematics, with particular focus on problem solving and reasoning in key stage 1, have already started to impact on achievement. However, you and your team have rightly identified the need to develop this further in order to increase the proportion of pupils who meet and exceed the expectations for their age by the end of key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety of pupils is of the utmost importance to everyone at the school. You and your two senior teachers are fully trained safeguarding leaders, and together you ensure that procedures to keep pupils safe are well understood and followed by all staff. You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Policies, such as safer recruitment, child protection and e-safety, are clear and comprehensive. You ensure that all staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training, and you have highly effective systems in place to induct new members of staff, volunteers and trainee teachers.

There are systematic procedures in place to support staff if they have concerns about the welfare or safety of a child, and you provided me with sound evidence that these procedures are consistently followed in practice. You track attendance and persistent absence regularly and thoroughly and you work closely with families and external agencies where this is required. Governors regularly check that processes for recruitment are diligently followed. Pupils I met were confident in their knowledge about how to keep themselves safe and were able to clearly articulate a range of examples where they had been taught in school about how to safeguard themselves, for example against 'stranger danger' and cyber bullying.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at: the progress of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2; the consistency of achievement for boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils; challenge for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged; and the impact of leaders' actions on improving attendance and reducing persistent absence.
- Children in the early years make good progress, and many exceed expectations for their age. Current pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 make good progress from their starting points, particularly in reading and writing. You have focused on improving English throughout this year and you have provided valuable support and professional development for teachers. Teachers have raised their expectations and, as a result, progress for current pupils across the school has been good in English. However, as you have identified, close focus is now required on mathematics in order to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils meet and exceed the expectations for their age, particularly in key stage 1.
- I scrutinised a variety of pupils' books. The scrutiny identified that girls now perform as well as boys in reading and writing. This was evidenced further in your own tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to write at length in English books and other subjects, such as science, religious education and topic. As a result, past differences in outcomes between girls and boys have diminished. Teachers have high expectations for the quality and quantity of pupils' work. As a result, pupils take great pride in their learning. In mathematics, girls also perform as well as boys. However, leaders have rightly identified that reasoning and problem solving in mathematics is an area for development and this is highlighted as a key priority in your plan to further raise achievement.
- Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well. They work closely with families to ensure that their children succeed at school. Parents comment that their children are treated as individuals and their unique needs are extremely well targeted and supported. Leaders regularly and routinely monitor the performance of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Tracking provides strong evidence that current disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. Workbooks scrutinised during the inspection provided further evidence of this. Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is well spent to support disadvantaged pupils, and they monitor the impact frequently.
- Progress made by the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is mostly good, particularly in the early years and key stage 2. However, leaders rightly identify that this could be further improved to enable a higher proportion of pupils to exceed the expectations for their age by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. Much work has already begun to address this in English, and leaders acknowledge that this drive should continue to secure further improvements. Leaders must now focus on accelerating the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers support pupils to develop their skills in problem solving and reasoning so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve age-related expectations in mathematics, especially in key stage 1
- teachers continue to target and challenge the most able pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 so a higher proportion exceed the expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

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 West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Luisa Gould
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the mathematics leader and a group of governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Together, you and I planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I talked to a group of children to consider their views of the school. I visited all classes and evaluated work in pupils' books. We discussed progress information for current pupils and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered 10 responses to the staff questionnaire and 32 responses to the online survey, Parent View. I also spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including policies and procedures and minutes from governing body meetings. I met with your school business manager to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding and scrutinised your procedures for vetting and recruitment.