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Mrs Angela Polatci
Headteacher
Marsworth Church of England Infant School
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Dear Mrs Polatci

Short inspection of Marsworth Church of England Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your staff and governors are passionate about the school, and strive to ensure that the personal as well as the academic needs of each pupil are met. You have a dedicated team of staff who support you in your endeavours to provide all pupils with a stimulating curriculum that enables them to progress well. One member of staff wrote:

'I feel proud of our little school: we offer so much for the children who attend it. Even though it is a small staff team we all pull together and support each other for the benefit of the children. Making children smile and laugh makes going to work very worthwhile.'

All staff know pupils very well and they provide a high level of care for them. Under your guidance, staff have created a delightful learning environment in which pupils are happy and safe. Classrooms and shared areas are alive with vibrant displays of pupils' work. There is a very warm and nurturing atmosphere in which each and every individual is valued for the unique contribution he or she brings to the school. Parents spoke about the 'family feel'. This is summed up by one parent, who wrote:

'My daughter loves this school and wishes she could stay here for ages. I have to agree with her. The staff are all amazing and there is a lovely bond that goes on with all staff, parents and pupils.'

Since your appointment three years ago, you have worked in close cooperation with governors to bring about further improvements to enhance the quality of education the school provides. Teachers have high expectations for pupils. They plan lessons that are interesting and inspire pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils work hard and they progress well in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in other subjects, including art. All staff enjoy positive working relationships with pupils and they strive to make learning fun and enjoyable. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is above average.

At the last inspection, you were asked to increase the range of activities in the outdoor area of the early years class. Since then, the early years outdoor area has been increased in size so that children have access to a much wider range of toys and equipment that help them to learn and develop. Children use the outdoor area regularly for learning and playing. Adults move between indoors and outdoors and ask questions that make children think. For example, during the inspection a small group of children were trying to make a 'chair' using large bricks. When one 'chair' collapsed, the teacher asked why they thought that had happened. Children thought about this and eventually agreed it was because 'it was too tall and not fat enough'.

The second area for improvement that you were asked to address was to further improve the quality of teaching. You have worked with advisers from the diocese to help teachers to improve their skills, particularly in the light of the more challenging demands of the new national curriculum. You have encouraged teachers to visit other schools to gather and share ideas. You observe their teaching and provide clear advice and guidance so that they know how their teaching can be even better. Teachers provide helpful feedback in response to pupils' work so that pupils know what they need to learn next.

Together with staff and governors, you have created a plan to show how you will bring about further improvements. Although you know the school well, you do not always carry out an incisive analysis of all aspects of its performance. Consequently, some priorities for development lack precision.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection. However, there is not always enough challenge for the most able mathematicians. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to use and apply their skills in different situations, including through problem-solving activities. Although pupils work hard, you know that there is more to do to ensure that they always present their work to the highest possible standard. You are taking steps to provide pupils with more opportunities to record what they do and how they do it in greater detail.

Safeguarding is effective.

Within this small village school, there is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. All staff, governors and parents confidently spoke about the ways in which pupils are kept safe and taught to be safe. One parent wrote, 'Perfect school. The children are in a safe haven in a not-so-safe world.' Despite this being a small school where all staff know pupils and their families very well, there is no complacency. All staff are

confident that they know what to do should they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm. All concerns are followed up rigorously, and external agencies are contacted when needed.

Pupils know that adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. They trust adults and know that they will help sort out any issues. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe from external dangers such as roads and water. They are also taught how to stay safe when using modern technology. The headteacher and governors have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose and fully compliant with statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, I also looked at the impact you have made since you became headteacher three years ago. I looked at teaching and provision in mathematics, and the extent to which key stage 1 teachers have built on the good start that children make in the early years. Additionally, I evaluated the early years to assess the progress that has been made since the previous inspection.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff have forged good links with the village pre-school and this has helped children settle quickly when they arrive at school. Children are taught in a stimulating environment where they learn well both inside and outdoors. They benefit from the improved outdoor area that is equipped with good-quality toys and learning resources. Children get on very well together showing good development of their social skills. They take turns, share equipment and listen carefully to each other and to adults.
- Children in the early years achieve well. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has improved over recent years. However, variations in the size of some cohorts make year-on-year comparisons difficult. Work in children's learning journey folders shows good progress, particularly in writing. Some children write short stories neatly with spelling and punctuation that is accurate, given their age. Some activities provided for children are challenging. For example, during a music lesson, they had to listen to and then repeat a rhythm using shakers and tambourines. This called for concentration and resilience. Apart from learning well, they thoroughly enjoyed this activity. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Provisional results in mathematics show an increase in the percentage of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standard. The headteacher introduced a new way of teaching mathematics that helps pupils to learn more effectively. Advisers from the diocese provided training for staff that has supported staff to use resources and equipment in a practical way which is helping to increase pupils' progress. Pupils have more opportunities to explain their work and to give reasons for their answers, and this has deepened their understanding. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged because they spend too long practising what they can already do. There are too few occasions when they deepen their learning, for example by applying their skills in different situations.
- Although there are two separate year groups in the key stage 1 class, teachers

are skilled in providing work that is appropriately matched to pupils' levels of need. There is a new system to record and track pupils' progress and this helps staff to understand exactly what pupils need to do to move forward with their learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Work seen in pupils' books shows that they cover a lot of ground. By the end of Year 2, they write imaginatively and with confidence. However, there are times when opportunities for pupils to apply their skills at greater depth are limited by the type of worksheets used. Pupils do not always present their work as neatly as they should do, and this can lead to unnecessary errors in mathematics and spelling.

- Work in pupils' books shows that they study a broad range of subjects, reflecting an exciting curriculum. Subjects are taught under an overall theme or topic and this helps pupils to consolidate their skills and understanding. During the inspection, pupils were learning how to use pastel crayons to create images of African animals to link with their study of South Africa. The teacher used vivid illustrations to demonstrate to pupils how to create sketches of animals. Pupils were totally absorbed in this activity and went on to create some delightful images of their own. This activity promoted a lively discussion about associated features of life in South Africa.
- Under your dedicated leadership, the school has continued to thrive. You have involved all staff and governors in agreeing the priorities for improvement and so there is a shared understanding of what you are aiming to achieve. You provide governors with accurate performance information so that they offer a high level of professional challenge and hold you to account. However, although you know the school very well, you do not yet record an incisive analysis of strengths and weaknesses that link closely enough to the school's developmental priorities.
- You have provided staff at all levels with many opportunities to help them to improve their skills. You have forged close professional relationships with other local schools that allow you to share and learn from best practice. You have reviewed the way in which the performance of staff is managed so they understand their role in bringing about improvements to the school. Staff commented on the many opportunities they have to develop their skills. They value your guidance. Governors report that they receive good-quality information, enabling them challenge you well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the evaluation of the school's performance is incisive and that priorities for improvement link explicitly to this analysis
- the level of challenge is raised, especially for the most able, by enabling pupils to practise their skills in different contexts and insisting work is presented to the highest standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, a group of teachers and support staff and a representative from the local authority. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I held a meeting by telephone with an adviser for the Diocese of Oxford. I visited both classes and I looked at work in pupils' books and their learning journeys. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school's development plan and information showing how the school keeps pupils safe. I considered the 17 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and eight written comments on free-text. I also considered the nine responses to the staff survey.