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Mrs Steph Fawdry  
Headteacher  
RAF Benson Community Primary School  
RAF Benson  
Wallingford  
Oxfordshire  
OX10 6EP

Dear Mrs Fawdry

### **Short inspection of RAF Benson Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Through your dedicated leadership, you have developed a strong, compassionate staff team who are determined to do their best for all pupils at the school. Leaders accurately reflect on the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your plans for improvement are clear, and monitored well by leaders and governors. As a result, the school continues to improve.

You have taken effective action to address the areas of improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. These were to improve teaching further and increase the rate of progress in Years 3 and 4. You have improved teaching considerably. You have developed clear policies and procedures to set high standards that are followed consistently well by staff. For example, teachers' questioning and feedback to pupils are highly effective. Typically, pupils make good progress from their starting points, across the school.

In the past, the rates of exclusion were high. You successfully coordinated staff and pupils to work together to refine your behaviour policy and this is no longer the case; pupils' behaviour is good. You and your staff know the pupils extremely well. The welfare of pupils is your priority, and the pastoral care provided is of high quality. Nearly all pupils have at least one parent who is in the services, and the majority of families live on the military base where the school is situated. All staff

understand the specific emotional and practical needs of pupils who have parents on long-term deployment. Leaders provide effective support so pupils' concerns are reduced and they can focus on learning when they are in school. Pupils recognise, and are appreciative of, the support they receive.

Many pupils join the school at different times of the year, often arriving part way through a key stage. In addition, many pupils leave the school before the end of key stage 2. Leaders have put in place very good transition arrangements so that pupils settle in well, or are prepared well for their new school. Pupils are assessed efficiently when they arrive so that any gaps in knowledge or skills are identified. Leaders have refined the school's systems to help pupils catch up quickly. As a consequence, pupils make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics when they first join the school.

Leaders monitor effectively the progress of pupils and there are few differences in rates of progress among different groups. Similarly, there are few differences in pupils' rates of progress across subjects, although writing and reading is stronger than mathematics. Girls and boys are making similar progress. While leaders recognise the need to support disadvantaged pupils, there are too few pupils for these to be monitored as a group. You have recognised that the rate of progress could be accelerated further for all pupils, especially in mathematics.

Governance is highly effective, providing challenge and support to the leadership team. Governors have a wide variety of skills and participate in regular training. Your reports to governors provide them with comprehensive information about the school. Visits by governors are frequent and they carry out their statutory duties well, for example in monitoring safeguarding. Governors know the school and contribute well to the school's overall improvement.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and its aims. One parent summarised the views of many in stating, 'This school does a great job supporting the unique military community in which we live.' However, the online parent questionnaire indicated a minority of parents have a variety of concerns, especially regarding the effectiveness of the school's communication. Leaders have already identified communication with parents as an area for ongoing improvement, and plans are in place to ensure that all parents have high levels of confidence regarding communication with the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on adults' suitability to work with pupils are rigorous and documented well.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. Staff have regular training so that they are knowledgeable about procedures to keep pupils safe. There are safe routines that are followed whenever pupils enter and exit the school's premises. The school's site is secure.

The school's records show that all concerns about pupils are rigorously followed up. Regular meetings take place between key personnel in school and outside agencies to ensure that those pupils who are at risk are supported well.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They report that they are looked after well. Pupils explained that while there is a small amount of bullying behaviour, it is dealt with sensitively and effectively by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- The focus of this inspection was to investigate specific areas of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of teaching; progress of pupils in mathematics; early years foundation stage provision; the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the behaviour and attendance of pupils.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers plan engaging lessons within a highly effective curriculum. Teaching has promoted a love of learning so that pupils enjoy their learning experience. Teachers provide helpful feedback to pupils, both verbal and written, about their progress. Pupils are keen to learn. Wider skills, including teamwork, are promoted well. Pupils especially enjoy practical investigations in science.
- Leaders took swift action to improve the teaching of mathematics, as a result of a dip in pupils' progress in the 2016 published data. Teaching now ensures that pupils have a sound grasp of mathematical concepts. Pupils are encouraged to explore their thinking when applying their mathematical knowledge to solve problems they may encounter in their lives. For example, pupils in the early years foundation stage participate in role play at an 'ice cream shop' to solve problems with money. Older pupils successfully apply their knowledge of percentage calculations to analyse profit margins. Many pupils explain that their favourite subject is mathematics, because it helps them in their lives.
- Pupils' work shows improving rates of progress in mathematics and the school's assessment information indicates that most pupils are meeting or exceeding age-related expectations. Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that teaching provides extra challenge to all pupils, including the most able. Some most-able pupils explained that while they usually feel challenged, they could try even harder work.
- The proportion of children gaining a good level of development in early years is well-above average. Children enjoy stimulating activities in a well-resourced, safe, learning environment. They learn together and develop good social skills and their achievements are documented well.
- Pupils who have special educational need and/or disabilities are supported well. Teaching overall provides appropriate focus so that pupils' needs are met. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils in individual or group sessions. Leaders effectively monitor all improvements that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make. There are many

examples of pupils making accelerated progress in their reading, writing and mathematics because of the precise support they have received. A number of parents also commented positively about the effective support for their children's specific needs.

- In the past, the school had an unusually high level of pupils who received fixed-term exclusions. Leaders have responded by implementing an effective behaviour policy. As a result, expectations of pupils' conduct are clear and communicated well.
- Leaders keep reliable records of pupils' misbehaviour. They analyse these records and respond appropriately to emerging patterns. Teachers engage with parents to identify and remedy issues that may negatively influence a pupil's behaviour. As a consequence of effective policies and procedures, the behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are unfailingly polite and proud to belong to their school. In this academic year there have been no exclusions.
- Attendance of pupils overall is above the national average for primary schools. You ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Most pupils rarely miss a day at school. Governors are well informed about patterns in pupils' attendance and provide effective support and challenge to school leaders in order to improve attendance. Leaders support the few pupils who are persistently absent to ensure that their attendance improves.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the teaching of mathematics so that more pupils, including the most able, make accelerated progress
- they continue to develop effective communication strategies with parents, particularly the minority of parents that express concerns, so that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively.

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 Child  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and middle leaders, including the assistant special educational needs coordinator. I also considered 26 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement partner.

I considered 61 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a further 41 written responses from parents.

I observed teaching and learning across the year groups. All observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher.

Scrutiny of pupils' work, across year groups and subjects, was carried out during learning walks. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, and 25 questionnaire responses from pupils were taken into account.

I looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's plans for improvement, and analysis of the school's performance data. Information relating to the attendance of pupils, safeguarding and child protection records, external reports, and minutes of governors' meetings were also scrutinised.