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Mrs Lesley Godwin
Headteacher
Marsh Infant and Nursery School
Abbey Barn Road
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Dear Mrs Godwin

Short inspection of Marsh School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 May 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 joined the school as headteacher in September 2015 and quickly established positive relationships with staff and governors by building on the strengths of previous leadership. 'Building the best foundations for every child's future' is the sentiment underpinning the school's values. With this in mind, you have created a calm and purposeful learning environment in which pupils are happy and safe. Pupils and staff have a sense of pride in their school. Pupils enjoy school because, under your leadership, staff have created exciting learning experiences that stimulate and interest pupils. One parent wrote, 'Lessons are inspiring and engaging and lead the children to be inquisitive and want to learn more. I would definitely recommend this lovely school to friends – it's a gem!'

You have worked with teachers to develop their skills by providing opportunities for them to visit each other's classrooms and observe teaching in other schools. Consequently, teaching is good and pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You have enhanced the role of middle leaders by providing coaching and mentoring so that they provide appropriate help and support to their colleagues. Staff report that there is an open culture of trust and respect that encourages them to try out new ideas to help pupils to learn. Staff are ambitious and have high expectations for themselves and for pupils. They have a shared understanding of the school's priorities, enabling them play a full role in developing the school.

Governors share the enthusiasm and passion shown by teachers. They are very proud of their school and point to key improvements since the previous inspection. Governors visit school formally as well as informally and so they know the school well. They have established good working relationships with the headteacher and staff and they play a key role within the school community. They are provided with good-quality information and so they know how well pupils are learning and what actions are needed to further raise pupils' standards. Governors say that the profile of the school within the community has improved and that the school is 'a safe place for everyone'.

You have responded well to the points for improvement raised in the previous inspection. You have introduced a programme of checks on the quality of teaching through informal learning walks as well as formal observations and feedback to teachers. These procedures have improved their skills and given them the confidence to reflect on and improve their own practice. Teachers have a very clear understanding of how their practice may be improved. You have also worked with staff to improve pupils' attainment in writing. The most recent assessment information shows that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in writing. They reach standards that are broadly as expected for their age. Work retained from last year shows that pupils develop stamina for writing, often producing lengthy pieces of work that are interesting, lively and well presented.

Your school improvement plan clearly sets out what needs to be improved further. You have accurately identified that pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics, although improved, could be higher. However, actions in the plan do not focus closely enough on specific groups of pupils. Consequently, some pupils, particularly those who are most able, do not all achieve as well as they should. Your actions to improve attendance, including identifying a governor to take responsibility for overseeing attendance, have increased rates of attendance overall. However, you do not make enough use of attendance data to identify the specific pupils or groups of pupils whose attendance gives most cause for concern.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates all aspects of the school. Staff and governors have received the appropriate checks on their suitability to be in school. They have received high-quality training so they know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a child may be at risk from harm. All policies and procedures regarding safeguarding are up to date and staff implement these diligently. The five designated safeguarding leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help they need in a timely way. Records are meticulous and they show a high level of attention to detail. This allows the safeguarding lead officers to check that the support that vulnerable pupils receive makes a difference.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe including when using modern technology. They are developing an understanding of how to look after themselves and learn to

stay safe. Staff are very caring and deal quickly and appropriately with any incidents that very occasionally arise. Pupils know that adults will respond to any concerns or worries they may have. Most parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agreed, or strongly agreed, that their children were safe and happy in school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked closely at boys' achievement in writing, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and the overall quality of teaching. We also looked at the attendance of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged.
- In 2017, the progress and attainment of pupils improved considerably in writing. Leaders acted on the disappointing results in 2016 by introducing a new scheme to help pupils to write. Teachers provide many opportunities for boys to practise and refine their skills and they provide topics that interest both boys and girls. In classrooms, boys are just as eager to write as girls. Work seen in pupils' books shows that boys progress as well as girls across the year. Pupils have opportunities to write when learning other subjects and so they frequently reinforce their handwriting, spelling and grammar skills.
- Owing to actions taken by leaders, all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in mathematics. Leaders introduced practical equipment that helps to consolidate and reinforce pupils' basic number skills. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to record numbers pictorially and so deepen their understanding of number. However, some of this work was too easy for the most able pupils and they did not progress as quickly as they could.
- The quality of teaching enables most groups of pupils to progress well. Teaching is lively and engaging and captures pupils' interest. Teachers plan interesting activities and use a broad range of stimulating resources to capture pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes towards learning. However, there are times when teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work that builds on what pupils already know. Some pupils, especially those who are most able, have work and activities that they can already do and so they do not make fast enough progress. Teachers' questioning is good and used effectively to probe pupils' understanding and to address their misconceptions.
- School leaders and governors have taken steps to improve pupils' attendance and this has already brought about improvements. The latest attendance information shows that pupils' attendance is now broadly in line with the average for primary schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is close to that of other pupils. A governor is responsible for overseeing attendance and reports each half term to other governors. She has established a clear flowchart showing the actions and critical steps to be taken should a pupils' attendance give cause for concern. However, leaders do not yet monitor the attendance of different groups of pupils and, therefore, cannot ensure that resources are always targeted towards those most in need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use all available information about what pupils can already do to provide work that builds on and extends what pupils, particularly those who are most able, are able to do
- attendance information is used more effectively to identify those groups of pupils who fail to attend school regularly and to target resources precisely to improve their attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body 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

I met with you to agree the key lines of enquiry at the start of the inspection. I carried out a learning walk with you, visiting classrooms in each key stage to see the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), mathematics and science. I met with two governors and with middle leaders. I also met with a representative from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school. I analysed a range of documentation and performance information as well as details of safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I analysed the 23 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as a number of responses to free-text.