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Mrs Jacquie Coles
Headteacher
Curzon Church of England Combined School
Penn Street Village
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Dear Mrs Coles

Short inspection of Curzon Church of England Combined School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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 your school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained a good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have established a safe and stimulating environment in which pupils thrive and flourish. Parents value the quality of care provided for pupils. This is reflected in the comment made by one parent who wrote: 'I could not wish for a better primary school. There is a special love and bond that children always remember from their happy days at Curzon. I cannot fault Curzon for the nurturing and care they show for their pupils.'

Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes, including two teachers who joined the school in September 2017. You have ensured a smooth induction into 'The Curzon way' so that they apply exactly the same policies as established members of staff. You have worked diligently to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make good progress in all years. You make sure that the curriculum is rich and stimulating and provides pupils with experiences that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

Teachers have high expectations and they plan interesting activities that build on pupils' previous learning. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils developed a deeper understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They did this by investigating how to make different types of quadrilaterals by applying their understanding of the properties of shape.

You have ensured that the school's strong ethos and values underpin all aspects of its work. You recognise that each child is unique with his or her own strengths and talents. You aim to build on these to create individuals who are very well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. You and your staff provide pupils with high-quality care. Pupils and parents commented on the fact that they are known to staff by name and so they feel valued and welcomed. The school plays an important role within the local community and as such is part of a large family. One parent reflected the views of many by writing: 'I love this school. It has a small village family feel in which it provides a safe and comfortable environment for my child to grow.'

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They behave exceptionally well, showing respect to adults as well as each other. They say that other pupils behave well and that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. They agree that staff treat them equally and fairly and that discrimination is not tolerated.

Inside and outdoors, the school is bright and attractive. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn and develop academically as well as personally. Since the previous inspection, you have developed the outdoor learning area so it is suitable for learning outside the classroom. The woodland area provides pupils with the chance to take part in 'forest school', where they learn skills such as building dens and sculptures. They carry out practical science activities such as exploring rocks and following bug hunts. During the inspection, children in the early years collected a variety of autumn foliage to create some delightful three-dimensional pictures.

You and your governors have successfully addressed the issues for improvement from the previous inspection. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 has improved in reading, writing and mathematics. You have been particularly successful in improving the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics. This has undoubtedly contributed to the school's success in raising standards in reading. You have introduced a system for teachers to record and track different groups of pupils' achievement so they can check whether pupils make expected or better progress.

You and your governors are justifiably proud of the way in which the school has improved over recent years. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and visit frequently. They bring a wide range of skills and experience to provide a high level of professional challenge to you and the leadership team. Governors provide good support to you and they seek the views of parents to keep abreast of issues facing the school. They evaluate the impact of their work to find out how much of a difference they make. Governors check that new initiatives that are agreed are implemented effectively to support pupils' learning. They ensure that the school provides good value for money.

You and your staff know that pupils' learning and progress in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics and you are taking steps to close this gap. Although pupils do well in the separate spelling, grammar and punctuation tests, they do not always use these skills when they write. You have worked closely

with staff to improve their skills and to raise their expectations of what pupils can do. While this has been largely successful, not all teachers consistently provide work that is at a high enough level in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The office manager maintains robust records that confirm that all staff and visitors to school are suitably checked. She works closely with governors to make sure all records are completed accurately. All staff and governors have been very well trained and know exactly what action to take should they have a concern that a child may be at risk from harm. You are tenacious in following up concerns and meticulous in your recording of incidents. You and other leaders work closely with outside agencies, including social care services, to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents who responded to the survey agreed that their children were happy and safe in school. Pupils are confident that staff will help them to resolve any concerns. They have a very good understanding of different forms of bullying, including those related to modern technology. Parents, governors and staff agreed that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils, I focused particularly on:
 - the learning and progress of pupils at key stage 1
 - how much progress boys make in writing
 - the extent to which pupils develop their reasoning in mathematics to increase their mastery and understanding
 - the effectiveness of subject leaders.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has improved in reading, writing and mathematics. It is now above average in reading and it is broadly average in writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils working at greater depth has increased, reflecting an improvement for the most able pupils. Teachers have a secure understanding of what pupils need to learn next and they plan work that matches their abilities.
- Leaders are aware that boys do not make as much progress as girls in writing at key stage 2. They are ensuring that boys and girls are provided with topics that engage their interest and inspire them to write. For example, Year 6 pupils used computers to design and create an information leaflet based on their recent residential visit. They used persuasive writing, including rhetorical questions to tell others about the range and benefit of the activities they experienced. Boys worked with interest and enthusiasm and explained clearly what they were learning. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to write and they provide support for pupils while doing so. For example, they provide phonic mats so that younger pupils have help to spell the words they wish to write.

- Work in pupils' books shows that some older pupils have a legacy of weak skills in writing. Sometimes, their handwriting is poorly formed and they do not always spell or punctuate their work accurately. There are times when their work is not grammatically correct. Although they are taught these skills, they do not consistently use them when they write.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. This is because teachers provide a variety of tasks that engage pupils' interest and allow them to develop a deep understanding of the subject. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, the teacher asked pupils to prove that subtraction was the inverse of addition. She provided different groups of pupils with numbers of different sizes so the activities were very well matched to their abilities. Pupils explained their methods using correct mathematical vocabulary and so increased their mastery and understanding in mathematics. However, this is not consistent across the school. There are still occasions when the level of challenge is not high enough and so some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and know how their subject links to the school's overall priorities for development. They understand the expectations placed upon them and they have been well trained to carry out their roles. They know what needs to be done and they are provided with time to carry out their duties. Most subject leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of their subject. However, they do not all have a clear view of the improvements they would like to bring about.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, particularly those at key stage 2, consistently use their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when completing written work
- there is a consistently high enough level of challenge for all pupils in mathematics lessons.

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, your deputy headteacher and your office manager. I met with three governors, including the chair of governors and with a representative from the diocese. I visited six classrooms with you to observe the quality of teaching and learning. I looked at work in pupils' books and I spoke to pupils about the school. I took account of the 82 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. I looked at the school's plans for improvement, assessment information, as well as documentation showing how the school keeps pupils safe.