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Mrs Carol Dunne
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dunne

Short inspection of Long Furlong Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In recent years, there was some instability in the school due to changes in leadership and staffing. During this period, there were many temporary teaching arrangements and pupils' standards declined, particularly in key stage 1. Since your appointment in April 2016, you have stabilised the school, brought renewed direction and successfully led improvements to the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. Staff and governors value your good work and together you form a cohesive team. Parents express high levels of satisfaction and appreciate the community feel of the school. As one parent explained, 'There is a wonderful sense of community in the school where everyone is welcome and supported.' Parents also value the hard work and support of the staff, with one parent commenting, 'Nothing is too much trouble.'

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. Warm relationships and good transition arrangements mean that children quickly settle into nursery and school. The early years setting is attractive and teachers plan activities that interest the children and help them to learn well. In class and around the school, pupils are well-behaved, courteous and respectful. Relationships are positive and there is a relaxed, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils enjoy the many subjects and topics they study, such as the Romans and the ancient Egyptians. Pupils are particularly keen on science, explaining how they carry out experiments to learn about the properties of different materials, such as reversible and irreversible changes. Pupils also enjoy and benefit from attending the many extra-curricular activities that staff organise,

such as sports, wildlife, drawing and Scottish dancing.

When the school was last inspected in April 2013, inspectors highlighted many strengths. Inspectors also asked leaders to raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and to improve pupils' oral skills and reading. You have maintained the strengths from the previous inspection and while teaching is not outstanding, it is good and continuing to improve. Pupils' oral skills and reading have also improved.

Following a period of instability and decline, you have made a number of staffing changes and stabilised the teaching team. You have also appointed new key stage and subject leaders to improve teaching and outcomes for pupils further. However, while these leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, most are new to their posts and have not yet been able to contribute fully to the school's improvement. You regularly check on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning, addressing any dips in performance. You are currently streamlining your tracking systems to gain a sharper view of how pupils are progressing. Although you have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, school improvement planning is not as robust as it could be. For example, the school's development plan does not include clear targets or milestones for pupils' achievement.

In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved the expected 'good level of development' was similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was close to the national average. However, more pupils met the required standard for phonics at the end of Year 2. In 2017, standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 were at or above the national average in all subjects. Pupils in key stage 2 achieved particularly well in reading where a much higher-than-average proportion attained the higher standard. While writing is improving overall and standards are above the national average, boys in key stage 1 are not achieving well in this subject. In 2017, a lower-than-average proportion of boys attained the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 1, and no boys achieved a greater depth of learning.

You have ensured that pupils have many opportunities to develop their speaking skills, for example, by rehearsing narrative and non-fiction texts. During our visits to classrooms, we could see pupils enthusiastically practising and adding actions to their oral newspaper reports about King Tut. This work is helping pupils to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills by enriching their vocabulary and helping them to understand the features of different texts. You have sensibly made writing an area of improvement for this school year, to be certain that these developments and improvements are sustained.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the rest of the staff team know pupils well. This means that you are alert to any changes in a pupil's behaviour that may indicate a concern. Appropriate training enables staff to be confident in how to refer any safeguarding issues to you. When necessary, you refer concerns to other agencies and take appropriate

steps so that pupils and their families are supported. You make sure that suitably detailed records of referrals and concerns are carefully logged. Nevertheless, record-keeping is not as systematic as it could be.

All the necessary pre-employment checks are carried out diligently and you apply the same level of rigour to the checks for any volunteers who help in the school. Governors ably fulfil their responsibilities by regularly checking the safeguarding arrangements. Pupils feel safe in school and have a very good understanding of how to protect themselves when using the internet by following the school's online 'smart' rules. Visits from the NSPCC contribute well to pupils' understanding of safety and there is a raft of helpful safeguarding information on the school's website for parents and pupils. Pupils also know about other aspects of keeping safe, such as road safety. Staff and parents are unanimous in their views that pupils feel safe and that the school does everything possible to protect pupils. As one parent commented, 'I have no concerns at all about safeguarding; my child is 100% safe at Long Furlong.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on a number of aspects of the school's work: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; how well girls are achieving in mathematics in key stage 2; the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1; and the effectiveness of leaders' actions in improving outcomes for pupils.
- In 2016, the proportion of girls who achieved the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average. In 2017, girls' attainment in mathematics improved and the proportion who achieved the expected standard was close to the national average. However, a lower-than-average proportion of girls attained the higher standard and girls made much less progress than boys.
- The school's assessment information shows that girls are now making good progress and achieving as well as boys. Teachers give an appropriate focus to developing pupils' reasoning and understanding of mathematical concepts and processes. They ask pupils to explain their thinking and to justify their answers. Teachers provide an appropriate balance of opportunities for pupils to develop fluency and confidence in calculation as well as apply their skills when solving problems. These combined strategies, good teaching and careful tracking are making sure that girls as well as boys continue to make good progress in mathematics.
- Good teaching in key stage 1 is enabling pupils to make good progress. In 2017, there was a significant rise in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and overall standards were above the national average. However, boys' writing was below the national average and boys achieved much less well than girls. While current boys are making more rapid progress, we agreed that this journey of improvement must be sustained.
- In key stage 1, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting tasks that engage pupils and motivate them to learn. Classrooms are busy places

of learning as pupils engage in their activities. During our visits to classrooms, we could see how pupils were absorbed in their number games, enjoying the competitive element of this activity while developing their calculation skills. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers provide many opportunities for them to develop their reading and writing skills. Interesting and topical themes, such as the 'Gunpowder Plot', provide meaningful contexts for pupils' learning.

- Your effective leadership has brought about improvements to the quality of teaching and, as a result, outcomes for pupils have improved. Your clear direction and focus on securing continued improvement are already having a positive impact. You have, rightly, focused on strengthening the leadership team and have appointed new leaders for each key stage as well as new subject leaders. These enthusiastic new leaders are knowledgeable and have established themselves quickly on to the staff team. However, many leaders are new to their roles and, therefore, have not yet been able to contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching and outcomes.
- You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvements are needed. You are sensibly taking steps to accelerate the progress of those pupils who did not achieve well in previous years. You and other leaders carry out learning walks, regular reviews of pupils' books and visits to classrooms. This means that you are well informed about where teaching and learning are strongest and where further support should be targeted.
- You have made effective use of external support and links with other schools to develop staff's expertise and strengthen leadership capacity. You have strengthened performance management arrangements to enable you to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. Governors keep a careful check on finances and make sure that funds are being used wisely, such as the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You, leaders and governors know the priorities to secure further improvement. You have worked hard to share this purpose and vision with everyone in the school community. However, while you are clear about the improvements that need to be made, the school's development plan is not sufficiently rigorous. There are currently no milestones and targets to allow you or the governors to measure the impact of this plan.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's improvement plan is sharpened with clear, precise success criteria that include targets and milestones for pupils' outcomes
- leadership is strengthened by developing the roles of the newly appointed leaders so that they contribute fully to driving improvements in teaching and learning
- boys' writing in key stage 1 improves to be at least in line with the national average and a larger proportion of boys achieve a greater depth of learning.

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

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited all classes to look at learning, talk to pupils about their work and review pupils' work in books. I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and safeguarding arrangements. I also met with a group of leaders to discuss how they are contributing to the school's improvement. I held a meeting with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and had a short telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils informally during the day and I met with a group of pupils from Years 2 to 6. I reviewed a range of the school's documents including the pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, safeguarding information, other safeguarding documents and policies. I considered the views of parents through the 42 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' free-text responses. I took account of the views of staff through 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I also met parents on the playground at the start of the school day.