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Mrs Julie Fellows
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fellows

Short inspection of Fairford Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, and other senior leaders, are deeply ambitious for all pupils. You make sure that staff and pupils understand your challenging expectations. This ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve strong outcomes. You, your senior leaders and governors evaluate the school's performance accurately and initiate clear actions to raise standards. For example, actions to address a slight dip in writing results in Year 6 in 2016 have resulted in an improvement in pupils' writing progress in 2017, so that it is now in the top 24% of that of all pupils nationally. Leaders' timely actions have ensured that pupils achieve highly at all points in the school, from Reception to Year 6, in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders track and monitor pupils' progress during the year and systematically hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. This means that pupils' progress and achievements continue to improve. Pupils told me that they enjoy learning and want to improve their work. The curriculum supports pupils to learn well. Pupils behave well in classes, around the school building and at breaktimes.

You have developed a strong and cohesive team of leaders who are driven by a desire to improve pupils' outcomes. Leaders' monitoring and support are effective in enabling teachers to further develop and hone their practice. The school's leaders report information to the governing body that helps governors to gather useful information about pupils' progress and standards. Governors use this information, and the findings of their own comprehensive monitoring programme, to challenge school leaders about the progress pupils make.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to raise the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by using pupils' answers and the questions they ask to deepen their learning further. Evidence gathered at this inspection shows that there is an active dialogue between adults and pupils about learning. Teachers respond well to pupils' questions and comments and as a result, pupils are responsive and eager to learn. For example, strategies using talk to prepare pupils for writing are highly effective in generating high-quality writing from pupils, enabling more of them to write at a deeper level.

The previous inspection also asked the school to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills independently, including across subjects. Teachers employ a range of strategies that enable pupils to learn effectively whether they work alone, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class. Teachers carefully assess pupils' learning and adapt their lessons and the strategies they use in the light of their findings. Pupils were very clear that they have a voice in their learning and in the life of their school. They are clear that they will be listened to by adults. For example, leaders regularly talk with pupils about their learning and the school's governors meet regularly with groups of pupils to seek their views, including on how to make the school even better. Older pupils have opportunities to contribute to the content of their learning, for example in helping to choose the texts they use in class. The school's pupil communication team plays an active role in decision making, such as in the development of a new healthy snack shop at breaktime.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school communicates very clearly that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This includes in providing detailed safeguarding information around the school and for parents and carers on the school's website. All school staff receive regular training, as do the school's governors. This means staff and governors know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Leaders of safeguarding will take prompt action to ensure that children are kept safe. Their record keeping is informative and up to date. They work closely with other agencies to keep children safe.

The school's comprehensive single central record and recruitment practices mean that new staff are recruited safely. They receive a thorough induction process, which means that they are clear about all aspects of the school's safeguarding culture. Governors evaluate the school's safeguarding work closely, for example through regular monitoring of the safeguarding audit and action plan. Governors consider safeguarding at each of their meetings.

Pupils I spoke with very clearly told me that they feel safe in school. Pupils know whom to talk to if something concerns them. They feel that adults will quickly help them. The majority of parents responding to the Parent View survey agree that their children are safe and well looked after in school. Pupils told me clearly what they understood bullying to be. They say that this does not happen often and that it will be sorted out. The majority of their parents agree. Pupils' attendance at school is above the national average.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I checked to see how well pupils write, particularly those pupils who had previously achieved nationally expected standards at key stage 1. This was because, at the end of Year 6 in 2017, middle-ability pupils made progress in writing at an average rate in contrast to their more rapid progress in reading and mathematics, which was in the top 2% nationally. While the proportion of middle-ability pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in writing was above the national average, the number of them writing at a deeper level was equal to the national level. This contrasts with reading and mathematics, where far more of them reached a higher level.
- Leaders have accurately identified that spelling and handwriting were key reasons why fewer middle-ability pupils reached higher standards in writing, and have put in place further actions to support pupils. This is resulting in middle-ability pupils working more securely to the raised expectations. In handwriting, scrutiny of pupils' work across the school clearly shows the impact, particularly in key stage 1 and in early key stage 2, of changes in the approach to teaching handwriting introduced in Reception Year. However, leaders know that some older pupils' handwriting has yet to catch up with the higher expectations.
- A close scrutiny of the work of middle-ability pupils, across a range of classes and subjects, shows that they are currently making strong progress in their writing. As a result of high expectations and careful, focused tracking of their progress by leaders and teachers, many of them are working at standards above those for their age. Pupils, especially older pupils, know clearly what they need to do to improve their written work and are keen to put this into practice.
- The curriculum encourages pupils to write well, especially boys. There are many opportunities for all pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes. For example, in art, pupils regularly write about and reflect on the work and lives of different artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci and the textile designer Celia Birtwhistle. Teachers' careful planning allows pupils to use their developing literacy skills in other subjects such as science. For example, as part of their topic on the Second World War, pupils wrote a persuasive letter to a government minister arguing why free milk should be given to children. Pupils know that teachers expect the same standard for their writing across different curriculum subjects. Their work shows that they rise to these expectations.
- Teachers' expectations of boys and girls are equally high and their work reflects this. Boys and girls across classes are motivated to write. Strategies preparing pupils to write have been successful in providing pupils, including boys, with a clear structure and increased ideas when they begin to write. This is helping to

build pupils' stamina and fluency when writing, resulting in more boys, as well as girls, writing at a more complex level.

- I asked how well disadvantaged pupils do in school. Numbers of disadvantaged pupils in individual year groups differ and in some comprise only a few pupils. Over time, their progress and attainment, particularly those of the most able disadvantaged pupils, mirror the high attainment and strong progress of non-disadvantaged pupils in the school. Strategies, such as regular meetings with an adult to discuss their learning goals, ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. Interventions are evaluated carefully, including by governors, and quickly changed if necessary. Governors know what the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils are at the school. They challenge leaders about their progress and have ensured that additional funds are well spent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- standards in spelling and handwriting continue to improve so more pupils can write securely at higher standards
- pupils are further supported to build their stamina and fluency when writing at length.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Gloucester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders. We discussed developments in the school since the last inspection. I checked safeguarding records and recruitment and vetting procedures. I met with governors, and spoke with a local authority representative. I spoke with teachers and support staff at the school. Together, we visited lessons across the school. We talked with pupils and looked at their books. Pupils read to me from their work and from their reading books. I observed and talked to pupils at breaktime and met a group of pupils to talk about school life. I considered the 61 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the 55 comments submitted.