

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Alison Bellingham  
Headteacher  
Long Wittenham Church of England Primary School  
High Street  
Long Wittenham  
Abingdon  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 4QJ

Dear Mrs Bellingham

### **Short inspection of Long Wittenham Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 February 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 February 2014.

Based on the evidence available during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In the light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since you took up post in September 2016, you have endeavoured to establish the school's motto 'Learn the Long Wittenham Way – Be proud. Be courageous!' by working hard to improve standards of teaching and learning and to communicate well with parents and carers. You, your senior leaders and governors lead a school in which pupils are happy and enjoy their learning. Your leadership team supports you well and shares in your strong determination to bring about the further improvements needed to ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly in key stage 1.

Many parents comment positively about the school's work, highlighting your determination to improve standards across the curriculum. One parent said, 'I see a determined effort to improve the school and not just settle for the status quo.' Parents praise the opportunities you provide which make them feel part of the school community and help them to understand what their children are learning. They appreciate the recent 'maths evening' and the 'showcase' where pupils presented the work they had done on their dinosaur topic and parents could look at their children's school books. Parents also praise the way in which you encourage pupils to look after each other. One parent commented, 'The school has a happy

family feel. Older children look after the little ones and the little ones look up to them.' The great majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

All the staff who responded to the online survey feel proud to work at Long Wittenham Primary and many say that the school has improved since it was last inspected. You and your governors lead a team whose members are appreciative of the importance you place on their professional development and the support they receive.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. It is friendly and they get on well with their teachers. They are articulate, polite and respectful to each other. Any incidents of bullying, which are infrequent, are effectively dealt with by staff who would, as one pupil stated, 'phone your parents – definitely!' Pupils like learning. When asked about their favourite subjects, virtually all subjects across the whole curriculum were mentioned because these are taught through the school's cross-curricular topics. The 'design a moon buggy' project was especially popular with the older pupils.

Governors understand the strengths of the school and the areas in which further improvement is needed. However, changes in leadership have led to governors directing their time and attention to the recruitment of a new headteacher and a new assistant headteacher. In addition, they have worked diligently to revise and implement policies so that the school complies with its legal duties. Governors recognise that they now need to refocus their efforts on raising their aspirations and expectations for the school. They need to provide the right balance of challenge and support to the school's newly formed leadership team so that pupils' progress is rigorously evaluated against high expectations.

Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have declined. Outcomes at the end of both key stages are too low. Children make good progress in Reception. You are working, tirelessly, to provide training for staff so that the quality of teaching and learning improve and pupils achieve well. However, the impact of your work on improving standards is inconsistent across the school. For example, the teaching of mathematics is improving more readily in key stage 2 than key stage 1.

You are clear about things the school does well and the areas that need to improve. For example, you have brought in a new system to look more closely at the progress that pupils are making. You recognise that it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work. You have also looked to improve the teaching of phonics and the assessment of pupils' phonics progress but need this to embed and be used consistently well.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to maximise the use of teaching assistants to fully support pupils' learning. Although you have provided training for teaching assistants, there is still inconsistency in the standards of support given to pupils. Where support is strongest, groups of pupils engage with their learning and make good progress. However, where support is weakest, low expectations, poor modelling and a lack of pace result in some disruptive behaviour and insufficient progress.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You are successfully committed to ensuring that safeguarding is your top priority. School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and staff receive frequent training on all aspects of staying safe. Every pupil spoken to during the inspection could identify an adult in school who would help them if they had a problem. Pupils are confident in their knowledge about how to stay safe, especially when using the internet. A specialist member of staff provides effective emotional and mental health support for any pupil in need.

Staff follow the school's policies and procedures well to report any concerns that they have about pupils' welfare or well-being, and these are thoroughly pursued by leaders. Leaders work closely with families and outside agencies for the protection of pupils. The single central register of staff pre-employment checks complies with statutory requirements.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in mathematics and writing across key stages 1 and 2, and the progress that key stage 1 pupils are making in their reading.
- Although some training and support have been given to staff in the effective teaching of mathematics, leaders are not yet rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of the support. You rightly observe that the quality of teaching of mathematics is not consistent across the school. As a result, too few pupils in key stage 1 are making the progress they are capable of. However, in key stage 2, most pupils are working at appropriate standards for their age and a good level of challenge is provided for the most able pupils. Disadvantaged pupils do at least as well as their peers. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to reason mathematically, discuss ideas and test theories. Consequently, pupils in key stage 2 are enthusiastic about mathematics and standards are rising.
- In their writing, pupils are not as productive as they could be. This is because writing tasks typically lack challenge and do not meet pupils' needs well enough, particularly in key stage 1. You have rightly identified the weaker aspects of pupils' writing in both key stage 1 and key stage 2, and you have provided support to staff so that they enable pupils to improve the technical aspects of their work. However, current information shows that pupils' progress in writing is not speeding up.
- You have made significant changes to how reading is taught and pupils respond well to the 'whole-class book' approach to learning. Pupils are typically articulate and able to express strong preferences in their reading. They enjoy both reading and being read to. Where reading is strongest, pupils read with impressive fluency and expression and are able to reason accurately and think creatively. Where reading is weaker, pupils do not have strategies to help themselves. They struggle to sound words accurately and, because teachers do not listen to them read regularly, their difficulties are not addressed. You have set clear expectations for the teaching and assessment of reading, including phonics, but

these are not yet consistently implemented. As a result, too many pupils in key stage 1 are not making enough progress with their reading.

- School leaders are aware of the school's current strengths and the areas for improvement. Their evaluation of the school is broadly accurate. However, the new systems in place to help teachers and leaders gain a more accurate understanding of how much progress pupils are making are still very new. As a result, teachers and staff are not yet consistently using this assessment information to help raise standards.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new system to monitor pupils' progress is used effectively to improve teaching and raise standards
- recent changes to the teaching and assessment of phonics are implemented consistently to ensure that pupils make better progress
- they take effective action to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, particularly in key stage 1, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, governors and a representative of the local authority. Together with you, I visited classrooms, talked to pupils and looked at pupils' work in books. We reviewed some pupils' work together and I discussed pupils' progress and attainment with another leader. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils informally during breaktime and in lessons. I observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school. I checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, monitoring and improvement, and written records of meetings. I reviewed the pre-employment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. I also took account of the 44 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Parents' views were taken into account through discussions with parents before school and the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I took account of parents' free-text comments and the six responses to the Ofsted staff survey.