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Mrs Anita Leech
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Dear Mrs Leech

Short inspection of Sunningwell Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 December 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In 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 grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have built a hard-working staff team whose members work together effectively to provide many rich and interesting experiences for pupils. Staff care deeply about the pupils at the school and share your strong commitment to ensuring that pupils' well-being and safety are given top priority. The school's good standards at the end of key stage 2 have been maintained, and Year 6 pupils achieved well in 2017. However, there has been more variability in pupils' attainment in key stage 1. You acknowledge that, in 2016 and 2017, key stage 1 outcomes were below the national average and particularly low in reading and writing. In 2016 and 2017, key stage 1 pupils' attainment in reading and writing was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally. Due to unforeseen circumstances, last year there were many staff changes and some recruitment challenges. These circumstances hampered your work to improve pupils' outcomes in key stage 1. Staffing is now much more stable. However, pupils currently in key stage 1 and in Year 3 are not making strong enough progress.

The school continues to be a happy, purposeful environment and relationships are positive. Across the school, pupils are polite and respectful of each other and behaviour in most classes is good. The school's Christian ethos is evident in pupils' thoughtful and caring attitudes. For example, some older pupils explained that they

are taught to 'think of others before themselves'. Through their work in religious education, pupils also extend their knowledge of other faiths and beliefs. The school's rich curriculum enables pupils to learn about interesting topics in a broad range of subjects. Visits, such as those to the science laboratories at local schools and to places of interest, enrich pupils' learning.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that their teachers always help them. They particularly value the many sporting activities that the school offers, including opportunities to be part of a team. Leaders, governors and pupils are rightly proud of the school's awards for the quality of their sports provision and achievement. Pupils also appreciate the contribution this makes to their fitness. The school's partnership with parents and carers is a strength and parents express high levels of satisfaction. They particularly appreciate the 'family atmosphere' in the school, the caring ethos and the support their children receive. As one parent explained, 'I have no concerns, my children are happy and enjoy coming to school.'

When the school was last inspected, the inspector asked leaders to improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and to strengthen leadership and management. In parts of the school there is some strong classroom practice, and you have successfully improved the quality of provision in the early years. As a result, outcomes at the end of Reception improved significantly in 2016 and 2017. Children make a good start to school and are now much better prepared for Year 1.

Your careful tracking of pupils' progress has enabled you to correctly identify where progress is not yet strong enough. The quality of pupils' writing in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 remains too variable. There has also been some variability in the quality of teaching. You are providing appropriate professional development and support for staff to help them to develop their skills, including through performance management. Governors receive regular updates of pupils' progress and visit the school regularly. They are supporting leaders effectively in their work to raise attainment. Although there are some weaknesses in aspects of the school's work, this is not reflected accurately in the school's self-evaluation. In places, this is too generous.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your knowledge of pupils and their families is a strength. This enables you, and other staff, to be alert to any concerns and take prompt action to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You are very knowledgeable about safeguarding and keep careful, systematic records and a clear oversight of any concerns about pupils. Staff are appropriately trained and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Your weekly safeguarding reminders keep staff up to date and keep pupils' well-being to the fore of everyone's thinking.

When appropriate, you refer on concerns to relevant outside agencies and work together with them to resolve any issues. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe, including when online. Pupils feel entirely safe in school and know that they can speak to their teachers if they have any worries. Pupils spoken to also

report that there is no bullying at the school. Governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements are regularly audited and kept under review. Parents and staff are unanimous in their view that pupils are safe at Sunningwell.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on particular aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding, how well current pupils in key stage 1 are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics, the actions that leaders are taking to improve outcomes in key stage 1 and to ensure that pupils who recently entered key stage 2 with low attainment are making good progress and how well pupils apply their writing skills across the wider curriculum.
- You recognise that the school's assessment information shows that pupils currently in key stage 1 are not making consistently good progress in reading, writing or mathematics. Pupils are not building sufficiently on their good outcomes at the end of the early years and their progress is inconsistent. Our review of pupils' books confirmed that their progress is variable and not yet strong enough, particularly in writing. While pupils are suitably applying their phonics skills when reading and writing, some other skills, such as punctuation, are not as securely developed. We also saw that the quality of pupils' work in books is not consistently good and teachers' expectations are sometimes not high enough. We found that teachers do not address weaknesses in pupils' writing consistently well, for example pupils' punctuation errors.
- Key stage 1 pupils' work in their mathematics books shows that many are becoming more confident with calculations and are working with larger numbers. During our visits to classrooms, we could see how some low-attaining pupils were being supported well to help them understand important mathematical concepts such as 'halves' and 'quarters'.
- Subject leaders are contributing suitably to the drive for improvement through their detailed action plans and support for colleagues. You are also providing appropriate support to improve pupils' behaviour, focus and attention in key stage 1. However, these well-considered plans and support have not yet had time to have a notable impact on pupils' progress and attainment, particularly in key stage 1.
- The current Year 3 cohort entered key stage 2 with below-average standards. While these pupils' progress in reading is good, their progress is not as strong in writing and mathematics. Pupils' written work is also of very variable quality and some is not well presented. Pupils' handwriting books show how they are developing an effective style, although many do not transfer this skill successfully into their other written work. Adults do not model the agreed style of writing consistently well when writing in pupils' books.
- The school's interesting curriculum provides many opportunities and much inspiration for pupils' writing. Teachers capitalise on stimulating topics such as the rainforest to design interesting writing tasks for pupils. Older pupils talked enthusiastically and shared their good-quality writing in science from their 'work' as 'forensic scientists'. When writing about 'how to create a fossil', pupils in Year

6 demonstrated a strong command of vocabulary. However, this good-quality writing is not yet consistent across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in key stage 1 improve, particularly in writing, so that more pupils attain age-related expectations and a greater depth of learning than in the past
- teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' written work and ensure that weaknesses in pupils' writing are systematically addressed
- teaching is strengthened so that pupils in all year groups make consistently 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

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and with two other teachers to discuss pupils' writing. Together we visited all classrooms and talked with pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work in books. We also met to review a further selection of pupils' books and discuss the progress that they are making. I met with a group of pupils from Years 1 to 6 and held a meeting with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also had a telephone conversation with the school's local authority adviser. I reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children, safeguarding information and other school policies and documents. I considered the 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. I took into account the 74 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.