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Mrs Jane Girle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Girle

Short inspection of Penn Wood Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school with Peter Barnes, Ofsted Inspector, on 20 September 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with a highly effective and skilled governing body, your work embodies your sage mantra 'better never stops'. One of the biggest strengths is the school's work in the continuing development of staff to take up key posts and responsibilities. This builds strong internal capacity for improvement and has led to seamless cover in the absence of two senior leaders. High-quality professional development has also been effective. Every teacher clearly understands the research and philosophy that underpin your determination to enrich young people's lives. Your strong vision is shared by staff and governors. All understand your mission to lay firm foundations for learning so that pupils achieve well at the end of primary school and are well prepared for the secondary phase of their education. The improvements you have made to the school since the last inspection were carefully considered. They have been undertaken for the betterment of pupils and to ensure that the school promotes the welcoming and inclusive values, shown in the Penn Wood tree, that are its true culture.

Children say that they enjoy coming to Penn Wood and they relish the challenges that are offered to them by your carefully planned curriculum, although they say that, in a few subjects, the work could be harder. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities that are available. They rate the clubs in drama, music, art and science as some of the best things about the school. Pupils correctly identify the friendliness of staff and pupils as another real strength of the school. They are courteous to each other, and pupils are keen to learn so that no lessons are

disrupted and no learning time is lost. Pupils clearly understand the importance of respect and celebrating difference and have a strong desire to include everyone in their play.

Most current pupils are achieving well. This is especially true in mathematics, where standards are high and progress is exceptional. Following recommendations from your last inspection, you have also successfully raised standards in reading. You monitor teaching and learning effectively and ensure that senior leaders and teachers work closely to improve pupils' outcomes. For instance, disadvantaged pupils are ably supported through effective pastoral care and additional support in the classroom. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points and most achieve as well as their peers. The dedicated work of the school's pastoral and inclusion teams ensures that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported with individually tailored programmes of support. Consequently, this group of pupils are also achieving well. At your last inspection, you were asked to ensure that the most able pupils are provided with sufficient challenge in their learning. You are well on the way to addressing this, but more work is needed to ensure that high enough demands are made in every curriculum subject.

Leaders are, appropriately, focusing on improving standards of writing in early years foundation stage and key stage 1. In pupils' books, good progress can be seen. However, in writing, the action that you are taking is not having a strong enough impact on final outcomes for children in early years and pupils in key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school community places the utmost importance on keeping pupils safe. The culture of safeguarding is strong and leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive appropriate levels of support. For example, records and emails show how you challenge other professional agencies and their recommendations to be sure that pupils' needs are met. Policies and procedures are embedded in the school's daily practice. All staff, including the designated safeguarding leads, are appropriately trained to be able to undertake work with pupils and keep them safe. As a result, staff are vigilant and know what to do in a range of situations. Their awareness is a critical factor in being able to recognise and refer any concerns quickly to leaders, where further and appropriate action is taken.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors oversee the work of leaders and successfully provide challenge to make sure that the school is fully compliant with the current regulations and legislation. Systems and processes are effective and lead to a knowledgeable and vigilant staff.

Importantly, every pupil said that they feel safe at school. They say that bullying rarely happens and that, if there was a problem, they are confident that adults would take quick and effective action to address it. Pupils spoke confidently about how to keep themselves safe, especially when using technology, and quickly reeled

off many strategies they have learned, such as never sharing passwords, using the highest privacy settings and reporting anything they think might be inappropriate to an adult. Parents and carers share their children's positive view of the school and some are appreciative of the strong pastoral support they receive, both for themselves and for their children.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on the impact of action taken by school leaders in response to the recommendation from your last inspection, to raise standards in reading. This was because standards of attainment in reading were below the national average throughout the school in 2016 and 2017. Since the last inspection, you have taken effective action to increase pupils' vocabulary and their conceptual understanding of new words. You have continued to promote pupils' story-telling skills in order to improve their spoken and written language and their understanding of story plots. In addition, you have made significant investment in high-quality books for all pupils and introduced regular, whole-class reading comprehension lessons across the school. You have established a library for pupils and their families to use before and after school and leaders tirelessly promote the importance of reading. Teaching plans and interventions target pupils effectively and ensure that work is well matched to their needs. Pupils are well taught in phonics lessons, which are carefully planned to meet the needs of all learners. This has resulted in a steady and continuing improvement in outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 1. You have ensured that all teachers have excellent subject and pedagogical knowledge and evidence of this can be seen in almost every classroom and in pupils' books. As a result, standards in reading are rising in key stages 1 and 2 and pupils' rates of progress are improving.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching and learning to improve outcomes for pupils' writing in early years and key stage 1. This is because the proportion of children reaching the early learning goal for writing at the end of their Reception Year has declined. It is also because pupils' attainment in writing remains below the national average standard. In particular, I focused on whether sufficient opportunities are provided for children to develop their communication and language skills across the curriculum. As with the first line of enquiry, you have taken effective action to improve the teaching and learning of writing in most areas of the school. Teachers, in almost every class, develop and enrich pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum, although opportunities to develop and enrich language are sometimes lost in the foundation stage. Teachers, rightly, expect to see a wide range of language in pupils' written work and this is reflected in the good progress seen in pupils' books over the year. Where teaching is strongest, teachers explain to pupils how to improve their work and pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise new skills. This strong practice is evident in most classes, but needs to become consistent throughout early years and key stage 1. Although good progress is evident in pupils' books, improving practice in the teaching of writing is not reflected in pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1.

- My third line of enquiry focused on whether pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum that offers them opportunities to extend their learning so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standards. School leaders have given attentive consideration to the needs of all pupils in the design of the rich and wide-ranging curriculum offered at Penn Wood. Teachers clearly articulate the needs of their pupils and share your determination to offer experiences that will enrich pupils' language and life experiences. Pupils rightly report that they are challenged in most subjects, citing a recent challenge question in geography, 'What's north of New Zealand?'. Standards of work in key stages 1 and 2 are high. For example, I was impressed by the ability of pupils in Year 5 to confidently explain the definition of musical harmony and to give examples of how they had studied and practised this in their music lessons. However, pupils would benefit from harder work in every subject. For example, one pupil said, 'We don't get challenge in everything; not in art, because that's not a main subject.'
- My fourth key line of enquiry focused on safeguarding. I describe how well pupils are kept safe, through a strong culture of safeguarding, in the paragraphs above.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- greater attention is given to developing children's early literacy skills. This is to ensure that a larger proportion of children meet the early learning goal for reading and writing at the end of their Reception Year and that standards in writing continue to rise at the end of key stage 1
- teachers provide a consistently high level of challenge across the entire range of foundation subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with a senior leader, inspectors visited lessons across the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils and examined work in their exercise books. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher, subject coordinators and the middle leaders. I met with three members of the governing body. I took into account 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including written

responses. A range of documents was reviewed, including: the school's development plan; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school's single central record of recruitment checks made on staff; information about pupils' achievement; records of pupils' behaviour and attendance; and minutes of governing body meetings.