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Ms Carol-Anne McCollum and Mr David May  
Headteachers  
Swanbourne Church of England VA school  
Winslow Road  
Swanbourne  
Milton Keynes  
MK17 0SW

Dear Ms McCollum and Mr May

### **Short inspection of Swanbourne Church of England VA school**

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Some aspects of the school's work, though, are excellent – notably the school's leadership and its contribution to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. As one parent commented, 'My child often comes home telling me how much he loves school. He even said he was glad they only had one week off, for half term, as he'd miss it too much if the holiday was longer.'

Governors, parents and pupils acknowledge the positive manner in which you co-lead the school. All recognise the ways in which you nurture pupils' well-being and many appreciate the meditation clubs that run, both for staff and pupils. Every parent who expressed a view would highly recommend the school to others. Your strong vision ensures that all pupils have opportunities to discover and develop a range of skills beyond impressive academic success. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the range of opportunities that are on offer to them. These include: the 'Young Voices' group who perform at the O2 stadium in London, visits to RAF Holton to experience life as a soldier and a visit to a local food bank to help with the distribution of donations.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to Swanbourne. They relish the challenges that are offered to them through your carefully planned curriculum although they say that in a few subjects the work could be even harder. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities that are available. They spoke enthusiastically about the clubs in drama, cooking, football and meditation, listing them as some of the best things about the school. Pupils identify the kindness of staff as another real strength of the

school. They say that staff will always help them if they are stuck with their work and encourage them to keep trying. Pupils are courteous to each other and 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.

The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully met. Standards in writing have improved and remain well above national averages, with an increasing proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards. Leaders have worked hard to improve their use of assessment information to track and monitor pupils' progress. As a result, you now accurately identify groups of pupils who could do even better and this action is improving progress throughout the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that staff know that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. All staff are well trained and alert to any signs that pupils might need extra help. Consequently, they feel confident to report concerns at the earliest stages. Your quick intervention results in strong and supportive relationships with families, enabling you to work together to resolve problems. As a result, almost no problems recur. You involve outside agencies when needed and have no qualms about looking further afield in order to achieve the best possible support for pupils.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures to recruit staff safely are fully understood and used well. Child protection records are detailed, well organised and stored safely.

I spoke with many pupils during the inspection. All told me that they feel safe and cared for in school. They told me that bullying is very rare indeed and that they have great confidence in teachers and other adults, particularly in their friendship mentors, to deal with any problems that happen. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet, because they have been taught about it in class. They told me that they feel confident to report any concerns to adults, remembering to keep any inappropriate material so that it can be used as evidence. Older pupils told me that they are pleased that the school recognises that most of them own mobile phones. They appreciate the guidance they are given to help them use their phones safely such as never sharing personal information and using the highest privacy settings.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first key line of enquiry focused on the impact of action taken by school leaders to improve outcomes in mathematics, particularly for pupils whose outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were average. This is because, while pupils' attainment is high, pupils make average progress in mathematics during their time in school. You have already identified the progress of this group of pupils as an area for development and this is a key feature of your school improvement plan. All staff know this group of children well and every mathematics lesson I

saw provided additional support for the middle-attaining pupils. As a result, this group of pupils is making better progress and increasing proportions of pupils are working at the expected standard and at higher standards. Lessons provide a good level of challenge but challenge could, occasionally, be even greater. Pupils told me that they would welcome harder work and confidently explained that it is good to have work that makes them really think. One pupil told me, 'I know some of us need extra support in most mathematics lessons but sometimes we actually are confident and we want to do harder work.' You have correctly identified pupils' basic number skills, such as knowledge of the multiplication tables, as critical to improving standards and are providing pupils with regular opportunities to practise and consolidate these skills. Pupils are making exceptional progress in Years 5 and 6 and, as you rightly point out, this is as a result of consistently good teaching throughout key stage 2.

- My second line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching and learning to improve outcomes for pupils in writing in key stage 2. This is because the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in writing is lower than the proportion attaining the higher standards in reading and mathematics. You have already worked hard to improve outcomes for pupils in writing and are seeing the impact of this work reflected in improving standards. However, expectations of all pupils could be even higher. For example, many of the targets pupils are set are linked to working at age-appropriate standards but pupils would benefit from targets which are set at above these standards. Displays in classrooms and language modelled by teachers support pupils to achieve but even more work could be done to model the higher standards to all pupils. Work in pupils' books is usually of a high standard and there is much evidence that pupils make excellent progress. There are also some exceptional examples of cross-curricular writing. For example, pupils used their historical knowledge to write a diary entry from the viewpoint of a German soldier. The soldier had just learned that the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to pay over £6 million in compensation for the damage done by war and was incensed!
- My third line of enquiry focused on whether pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum which offers them opportunities to extend their learning so that an even greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standards. Leaders have given careful consideration to the curriculum and the rationale for what is taught. Staff take care to use local resources and facilities such as Bletchley Park and RAF Holton to make local history come alive for pupils. Work in books is always of a good standard but it is inconsistent because in some subjects, in some classes, it is exceptional. You acknowledge that subject leaders now need to share their expertise so that teaching and learning across all foundation subjects become consistently excellent. Your decision to employ specialist teachers to improve and enrich the curriculum in music, art, physical education and French has inspired pupils and they talk about their learning with enthusiasm. For example, Year 6 pupils rate French lessons highly and say the current topic of 'food' is taught too well because it makes them feel hungry! Art is a real strength of the school. Pupils take pride in their work, which is of an excellent standard. I saw careful pottery work and some exceptional drawings of prehistoric animals, using charcoal and oil pastels, in sketch books. The curriculum engages and motivates pupils, inspiring them to read widely and to write with conviction. It

makes a significant contribution to the high academic standards that pupils achieve, as well as encouraging their interest in local, national and global affairs.

- 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:

- teachers provide even greater challenge in the teaching of writing so that pupils will achieve the same high standards in writing as in reading and mathematics
- subject leaders share their expertise so that excellent teaching is shared across all the foundation subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together with senior leaders, I visited lessons across the school. I spoke to pupils and examined work in their exercise books. Meetings were held with both headteachers. I met with three members of the governing body. I took into account 35 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.