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Miss Sally Morris
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Dear Miss Morris

Short inspection of The Ferncumbe CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2019, 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 previous inspection. You and your colleagues have addressed the areas identified for improvement at that time.

This is a confident and happy school. It has expanded steadily over recent years. With your governing body, you have adapted the structure of the leadership team to manage the larger school, for example appointing phase leaders in addition to subject coordinators. You have a sound understanding of the school, and have drawn up clear plans for improvement with measures that allow you and governors to check on their impact. Records show that you and your colleagues monitor the quality of teaching regularly, and provide teachers with guidance on how to improve their practice. You have identified appropriate training for staff, for example on how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I identified, however, a certain lack of curiosity about how academic standards can be further improved. For example, the school improvement plan does not have a strong focus on improving pupils' outcomes.

You are rightly proud of the school's ethos, which is firmly grounded in its Christian principles. Parents, carers and pupils that I spoke with naturally referred to the school's family feel, by which they meant that everyone is known as an individual and is expected to demonstrate an active care for others. Pupils in Year 6 act as buddies for children joining the school. Through their religious education lessons and, for example, links with a school in Sierra Leone, pupils develop an

understanding of the wider world and a respect for those who come from cultures other than their own.

Pupils behave very well in class. They listen attentively, and collaborate well with others when asked to do so. Pupils told me that working in pairs helps them to get to know their peers. They are conscientious, and consistently present their written work neatly. The school works effectively to support those few pupils who join the school with marked social and emotional needs. During the inspection, we saw these pupils applying themselves and learning successfully.

Pupils play together happily at social times. They are polite, friendly and articulate. The school has prepared them well for secondary school and pupils feel confident about the move. Their attendance is currently above the most recent national average, and no groups of pupils are held back by poor attendance.

The school's behaviour policy is centred on a restorative approach, setting out a number of ways in which conflict can be resolved. Using this approach, pupils are expected to address and express their own feelings, and to understand those of others. Those pupils I spoke to understand the approach well, and think that it is more effective than the simple imposition of sanctions. The school council and the opportunity to take up positions of responsibility also contribute well to pupils' social development and their awareness of British values.

Teachers set work that is matched well to pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. They check on how well pupils have grasped new ideas, and provide further explanation when necessary. During the inspection, teachers introduced pupils to suitably complex and challenging ideas. They expected pupils to provide extended verbal answers during discussion, and asked further probing questions to develop their thinking.

Many children enter the school with skills that are above those typical for their age. During the inspection, we saw children learning well in the early years, with some being well advanced in their reading and writing. Nevertheless, the proportion of children who have attained a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class has declined in recent years to be in line with the national average. You believe that children's skills may have been judged harshly. You have therefore taken steps to ensure that leaders' judgements are precisely in line with those made in other schools.

In the last two years, pupils' attainment at key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been above the national average. Attainment at key stage 2 rose in 2018, and standards in reading were very high. Those pupils who left Year 6 in 2018 had made progress from their key stage 1 starting points that was broadly average. Inspection evidence showed that current pupils are making strong progress in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's strong safeguarding culture is underpinned by the recognition that 'it could happen here'. Recent training and posters around the school have emphasised that, despite the pleasant surroundings, staff must be vigilant for any signs that pupils are at risk of harm. Staff know the pupils well, and work effectively with parents to ensure that pupils remain safe. All organisational arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils told me that bullying in school was very rare, if it happened at all. They have complete confidence in the staff to resolve any difficulties that do arise. Those I spoke with were able to recall in good detail the advice they have received about online safety. They learn about other aspects of safety, such as fire safety, and a high proportion of pupils learn to swim.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have acted successfully to address standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers set clear expectations for what pupils can achieve, based on their existing skills. Pupils understand how to draft and edit their work, including how to identify their own errors. As a result, pupils make strong progress in these aspects of their writing. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of key stage 2 has been well above the national average over time.
- Teaching in mathematics gives pupils the opportunity to reason mathematically and to solve practical problems as well as developing fluency in performing calculations. Pupils develop their thinking through classroom discussion as well as through written answers. Inspection evidence showed that teachers are skilled at presenting mathematical ideas in different ways, including through the use of practical approaches and equipment.
- Leaders manage the provision for pupils with SEND effectively. They identify additional needs at an early stage, and work well with parents and specialists to plan how a pupil's additional needs can be met. Leaders monitor pupils' progress, and amend the provision when appropriate. A high proportion of the school's relatively few pupils with SEND have social and emotional needs. For these pupils, leaders prioritise improving their behaviour, attitudes and self-confidence.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is commonly too small to draw firm conclusions about their progress. Across the different year groups, however, their attainment has been below that of other pupils in the school. Leaders and governors check on the overall impact of the pupil premium, but do not evaluate the success of the different strategies to assist with their future planning.
- The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Occasional focus weeks complement the regular teaching of the full national curriculum. For an enrichment hour each week, key stage 2 pupils learn on rotation a variety of creative and practical activities such as sewing or drama. Those pupils I spoke with enjoy the variety of the curriculum, and understand the reasons behind

learning what they do.

- The workbooks that we scrutinised showed that pupils generally achieve well in foundation subjects. Standards in science are particularly high. All pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to participate in a range of concerts. The curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in new ways.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have opportunities to share and learn from best practice so that pupils continue to make strong progress across the curriculum
- they evaluate the impact of pupil premium spending and adapt planning accordingly to maximise disadvantaged pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Spoor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, other leaders and governors. I also held informal conversations with other members of staff. I spoke by telephone with the school's improvement partner. I observed teaching of a range of subjects, jointly with senior leaders. We scrutinised pupils' work from the current academic year. I met with a group of key stage 2 pupils to gather their views, and spoke informally with several pupils of different ages. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour at social times and when they moved around the school.

I took account of the 73 recent responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including comments made using the free-text service. I also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised a wide range of documents, including: the school's evaluation of its performance and its plans for improvement; records of governors' meetings; policies; curriculum plans; and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. I looked in detail at records that show how the school keeps pupils safe.