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Mrs Jacquie Coles  
Executive Headteacher  
Speen Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School  
Flowers Bottom Lane  
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Dear Mrs Coles

### **Short inspection of Speen Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 May 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your arrival in September 2018, you have quickly identified the correct areas for further improvement, and your relentless determination has led to pupils making good and sustained progress. You are ambitious for Speen and this can be seen in the improvements you are making, such as the introduction of pre-school provision for children. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. As one parent said: 'It's like a family here – no one is lonely or left out. I love it here and so does my child.' You have rightly ensured that teachers and teaching assistants have undertaken valuable training to increase their expertise, and you work effectively with other schools to share good practice. You have reinvigorated teaching and learning, and consequently, these meet the needs of pupils more effectively.

Senior leadership is a key strength of the school and you have worked hard to ensure that everyone understands and shares your ethos and vision. The refinements that you have made to teaching and learning are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Staff work hard to ensure that the work set for pupils is pitched correctly so that most pupils make good progress.

Governors are highly confident in your leadership. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have taken some difficult, but wise, decisions to ensure the school's financial security and future

sustainability. Governors use their knowledge well to support and challenge you and your leaders to improve pupils' achievement. Together, you have a very clear purpose and vision for the school. One governor summarised the governing body's vision in saying, 'We have such an opportunity to provide children with a brilliant start to education and life as good citizens, we can't let it pass us by.' Governors are acutely aware of their duties and responsibilities, visiting the school regularly and undertaking training and development with school staff. They carry out a range of tasks to evaluate the effectiveness of the school, including monitoring safeguarding arrangements and pupils' attendance. As a result of this very strong leadership, the school continues to be good, and is improving.

Speen is a very happy school where pupils get on well together and support each other. Pupils are supervised well and have clear routines. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good and they are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem. Pupils enjoy their lessons and appreciate the adults who help them to learn, saying, 'The teachers are always really close and everyone will help you when you need it.' Pupils say that they have no concerns about bullying, and if it did happen, they know that it would be dealt with swiftly. During playtimes, pupils of all ages play together happily in a caring and supportive environment. Pupils are highly positive about the school and list their lessons in the forest school and mathematics as their favourite subjects.

Achievement continues to be good. The proportion of children in Reception Year reaching a good level of development is consistently above the national average. In the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils' attainment is above the national average for the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations is consistently above the national average, and a high proportion of pupils attain the higher standard in reading. However, fewer pupils attain the higher standards in writing and mathematics. Leaders have carefully evaluated the reasons for this and have, rightly, put in place an effective range of measures to accelerate pupils' progress. You have an unrelenting drive to improve achievement, but recognise, correctly, that there remain some pupils who could make even better progress, especially in writing and the wider subject areas.

Since joining the school, you have prioritised work to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You rightly acknowledge that setting work at the right level of difficulty for each pupil is still an area for development, but this is working very well in reading and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are making good progress in these areas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is your main priority and you have ensured that a culture of vigilance is apparent in all aspects of school life. Safeguarding is always discussed at staff and governor meetings. Speen offers pupils a very caring, safe and secure environment. Recruitment checks when employing staff are fit for purpose. You provide ongoing training so that everyone knows what to do if they have a

safeguarding concern about a pupil. The school works well with outside agencies to support families. Leaders have a good knowledge of safeguarding and ensure that systems are reviewed and evaluated appropriately. The governor responsible for safeguarding visits the school regularly, providing a good level of challenge and support.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example through lessons, assemblies, and material displayed around the school. They are also taught about how to keep safe when using the internet. Staff support pupils well, ensuring that they feel happy. Parents state that their children are safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In addition to considering the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements, during the inspection we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: how the teaching of writing enables groups of pupils, particularly the most able, to make good progress; the impact of action taken by school leaders to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics; and whether the wider curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a good level of challenge for all pupils.
- Leaders have accurately identified the strengths and areas for development in the teaching of writing. Teachers track progress with increasing care and accuracy and use this information to provide pupils with additional support where it is needed. Staff training on effective marking and feedback in writing has been provided and, as a result, pupils are beginning to proofread and edit their own work. Pupils' books show that, although pupils receive feedback on how to improve their work, they lack opportunities to practise and refine the higher level skills across a range of subjects. Although pupils make good progress in their writing, you rightly say that, if teachers' expectations of pupils were higher, even greater proportions of pupils could achieve the higher standards in writing.
- The mathematics leader has clearly recognised how to promote pupils' achievement in this subject. She has undertaken training and has used this to train colleagues across the school. As a result, there is greater consistency in the approach to teaching, and pupils have frequent opportunities to practise solving problems and to explain their reasoning. Consequently, pupils are now making strong progress in mathematics, and the available performance information shows that far greater proportions of pupils are working at the higher standards. Teaching assistants support pupils well to increase their progress further, especially when working in small groups. Adults ask carefully worded questions to extend pupils' thinking and reasoning skills. Pupils' books clearly indicate that they are make good progress, with many making stronger progress.
- You ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, and you have enriched it with theme weeks such as history week, where pupils learned about hospitals and medicines 'then and now'. Pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their topic weeks, and relish the opportunities to follow their own learning interests through research, and develop their creative talents through art and dance. However, leaders at all levels recognise that the wider curriculum does

not consistently provide a sufficient level of challenge for pupils, particularly the most able pupils. Rightly, leaders say that this should be a priority for improvement next year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high expectations are developed and sustained in writing, especially for the most able pupils, so that greater proportions of pupils attain the higher standards
- a carefully planned, wider curriculum provides appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils so that greater proportions of pupils make consistently good progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford 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 the senior leader, I visited lessons in early years and key stage 1. I spoke to pupils and examined the quality of work in their books. I held meetings with senior and middle leaders, including the executive headteacher and the subject leaders for mathematics and English. I met with four members of the governing body.

I took into account 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I took into account 10 responses to the staff survey and 15 responses to the pupil survey. A wide range of documents was reviewed, including: school improvement planning; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school's single central record of recruitment checks made on staff; school policies; information about pupils' achievement; records of attendance; and minutes of governing body meetings.