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Mr Paul Crandon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Crandon

Short inspection of Carswell Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 July 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 appointment in September you have carefully reviewed provision. You have developed a strong central vision based securely around the ethos of the school. You have shared this with all stakeholders, including governors, so that everyone has a clear understanding of the approach to learning at Carswell.

You are rightly proud of the school's focus on developing pupils as engaged and reflective learners and in the ways in which this learning is shared and celebrated. For instance, Year 3 pupils learning about Italy recently celebrated this by hosting an Italian restaurant evening for parents. You aspire to do even more to ensure that your high-quality curriculum is further strengthened. To this end you have invested in staff training so that all staff are confident in all subject areas. You are planning to further raise expectations, for instance by insisting that pupils apply their knowledge of spelling patterns to their work across the curriculum.

You have maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection. Children get off to a good start in the early years. During the inspection children in the Nursery were enthusiastically dancing and joining in with singing of well-known pop songs whose lyrics had been adapted to their life experience. Children's enjoyment of singing along to 'We Will Rock You' with verses about kicking crates and flinging sand was palpable. In Reception Year children demonstrate strong behaviours for learning. They listen carefully to the teacher and follow instructions. In this way, children leave early years as engaged and confident learners, ready for the

challenges of Year 1.

The good support and high-quality care that pupils receive across the school are also a strength. For instance, the high proportion of pupils from service families benefit from recognition of the places their loved ones are deployed to and time to explore any worries that they have.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They like the way the curriculum inspires them to write through purposeful activity, such as writing letters to Amnesty International. Pupils enjoy the focus on learning outdoors in projects such as 'Down our Street'. They value the productive and respectful relationships they build with each other and staff, in keeping with the school's ethos. Pupils agree that the school's ethos of being kind is of central importance. They told me that if people have problems, 'We are just extra kind to them.'

Parents who spoke with me at the gate were confident that their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Almost all of the parents who completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school. A parent explained how she values the 'nurturing and kindness which will help my child to reach her full potential'.

You are not complacent, however. You and your leadership team have high aspirations for the pupils of Carswell. You engage fully with the local authority and the local Abingdon partnership of schools to strive to constantly develop teaching and continue to raise outcomes. You correctly identify that further improvement is needed in key stage 1, particularly in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping pupils safe is firmly rooted in the school rules of 'Be safe, be kind, be respectful.' Pupils told me that they feel safe at school. They are confident that bullying happens rarely and that most fallouts 'only happen once'. You ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when learning and playing online.

Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to help keep pupils safe. When it is necessary, they are tenacious in pursuing what is best for pupils, for instance by ensuring timely transition meetings take place to support pupils in moving on successfully. Leaders monitor information such as pupils' attendance carefully to spot any patterns that might give rise to concerns. The home-school link worker works closely with the few families for whom regular school attendance presents challenges.

Record-keeping in respect of safeguarding is meticulous. All necessary checks are completed on the appointment of staff and the information is stored securely in the school's single central record. Leaders keep safeguarding systems constantly under review. For instance, you are moving to an online system in September to help ensure that information is shared promptly and in detail. In this way leaders ensure

that high-quality safeguarding is of central importance to the work of the school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked closely at several aspects of the school's work, including the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Knowledge and skills across the curriculum are well developed through the engaging projects such as 'Give me Space' or 'Rethink a Beautiful World'. Pupils' subject-specific skills are built through regular science investigations, strong geographical mapwork and a developing sense of historical chronology. Pupils' understanding is further enhanced successfully by the many visits and visitors.
- High-quality learning journey work on the walls demonstrates your focus on ensuring that pupils connect their learning skills to build and apply their knowledge in a purposeful way. For instance, a project with a geography focus in Year 5 resulted in pupils making a film entitled 'Location, Location, Location'.
- Pupils' work in their books is generally of high quality. Occasionally in their enthusiasm to record their thoughts and ideas there is a slightly slipshod approach to spelling. Sometimes pupils' spelling across the wider curriculum lacks the attention to detail and the skills they demonstrate within work with a specific English focus.
- Subject leaders are passionate about the delivery of their subjects. They have developed skills progressions to support colleagues in planning. They monitor their subjects through regular book looks and talking to pupils. For instance, the personal, social, health and economic education coordinator commented that pupils, 'know it and show it!'
- We also looked together at the governance of the school. Governors are recruited for their skills and experience. They are well inducted so that they are clearly aware of their responsibilities. Governors demonstrate a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They visit school regularly and feel a sense of unity with leaders in striving for the very best for the pupils. They understand their responsibility for challenge as part of that process and are confident in holding leaders to account for improvement initiatives using a range of information.
- We also looked together at the quality of provision for pupils in key stage 1. You are aware that, historically, fewer pupils than proportions seen nationally have attained at the expected standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Following a focus on raising expectations you are pleased that outcomes are improving, particularly in reading and writing. You have plans in place to address a continued need to further raise attainment. You have also wisely ensured that pupils in lower key stage 2 who did not attain well previously have the support in place that they need to help them to catch up.
- The work in pupils' books in key stage 1 demonstrates good progress in writing. Pupils write for a range of purposes. Their writing is successfully supported by strong links between the texts they read and their writing tasks. Pupils use an increasingly wide range of punctuation appropriately and structure their writing

clearly.

- The development of pupils' mathematics skills in key stage 1 lacks sequence. Pupils do not build consistently on their skills. A recent focus on developing mathematical reasoning is starting to be shown in some pupils' books, but this too lacks consistency. Sometimes work is not well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the most able pupils in Year 1. When this happens pupils' progress is not evident.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' spelling is of high quality in their work across the curriculum
- achievement, particularly in mathematics, in key stage 1 continues to rise, by ensuring that pupils build quickly on the skills and knowledge they develop in the early years to support them in attaining well.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Gordon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met regularly together. I also met with staff and a member of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I reviewed documentation, including: the school's own information about pupils' achievement; the school improvement plan; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.

Together, we visited classes across the school. In lessons, I observed pupils learning and spoke to pupils about their work. I conducted several scrutinies of pupils' work. I had a meeting with pupils to gather their views of the school. I took into account the views of parents I met on the playground, and also considered 85 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account a letter I received from a parent.