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Ms Anne Hewett and Ms Michelle Hastings
Co-headteachers
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Dear Ms Hewett and Ms Hastings

Short inspection of Great Rollright Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2017, 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In particular, the top layer of leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of a co-headteacher. This arrangement works well because you are both equally dedicated to improving the school. You have also established effective ways of working in partnership. In response to a dip in some areas in 2016 and a trend of below-average scores in the phonics screening check, you have successfully implemented a number of new approaches. However, you are not complacent. You are rigorously evaluating the changes you have made to ensure that they enhance pupils' learning, achievement and enjoyment. You wisely use your evaluations to decide upon future developments. The self-improving culture you have created extends to the pupils. Comments made by pupils, such as, 'We need to make mistakes so we can learn better', are indicative of how well you have established this ethos.

You have successfully forged links with the local community as well as communities further afield. These links have enabled you to be outward looking, despite being a small school. Pupils play a key part in the school's success through the leadership positions they hold and through their determination to make the school as good as it can be. They display very positive attitudes to learning and are fully involved in all aspects of school life. In lessons, pupils strive to achieve their best and relish the opportunities they are provided with to explore, reflect on and delve more deeply

into the topics they study. The school has welcomed a number of pupils whose previous experiences of education have been turbulent. The nurturing school community that you and your staff have established has enabled them to flourish. The overwhelming majority of parents are very complimentary about the academic and pastoral support you give to all your pupils. One comment, that, 'The care and attention that all teachers provide is to be commended', typified parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Pupils also benefit from the additional experiences you provide, which successfully develop their creative and team-working skills. On the day of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were working with an opera company to create their own version of Mozart's opera, 'The magic flute'. Despite this kind of music being unfamiliar to most of them, the pupils responded rapturously to their new musical experience and dedicated themselves fully to the project.

You have rightly identified that pupils have not always fulfilled your high expectations either in mathematics or in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Following detailed analysis, conducted in conjunction with your governors, you have substantially developed the mathematics curriculum. Teaching in mathematics now enhances pupils' reasoning skills and their ability to apply their knowledge at a deeper level. You have also successfully implemented a new method for teaching phonics. As part of the new approach, links between phonics and spelling patterns are effectively reinforced. However, you recognise that some older pupils who have not had the benefit of the new approach do not always apply their phonic knowledge when they write. As a result, some key stage 2 pupils' spelling is not accurate enough. You have good plans in place to tackle this.

Following your robust review of the approaches to assessment you implemented when national curriculum levels were abolished, you are now sensibly streamlining the way you assess pupils' learning. You have developed a single approach which will enable you clearly to identify the progress that pupils make from their starting points. However, you have not considered in enough detail how this more streamlined approach will assist you in ensuring that pupils make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Governance has developed since September 2016, with the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body, both of whom have relevant experience. The governing body now carefully monitors the impact of changes. For example, each governor has oversight of a particular aspect of the school improvement plan. Governors carry out detailed checks to establish whether changes are having the anticipated impact. This tighter approach means leaders are now held to account more stringently for the impact of changes on pupils' learning and outcomes.

You have successfully developed those areas, including mathematics teaching, which were identified as needing improving in your previous inspection report. Good teaching now challenges pupils to think more deeply. Of note is the way you have developed effective ways of supporting pupils in overcoming any barriers to success. As a result of the support you provide, overall attendance improved last academic year, as did the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have been highly vigilant in identifying and then implementing any additional safety measures that are relevant to your pupils. For example, you have ensured that plans for reducing risks when pupils are on trips abroad are very detailed. You have also introduced bike-safety training so pupils know how to keep safe when riding their bikes to and from school. You sensibly used a recent local authority safeguarding audit as an opportunity to clarify the best approach for referring pupils to the local authority's welfare officers, which you now carefully follow. You have acted very promptly in implementing the small number of recommendations made following the audit, which was positive about your safeguarding work. For instance, you have made a number of changes to the way you manage the school site.

You meet the needs of pupils about whom you have concerns effectively, by working closely with families and carers. To ensure that pupils who struggle with handling their emotions have the support they need, you have ensured that a member of staff is trained to provide appropriate assistance. Parents praised highly your work to improve pupils' sense of well-being and the very nurturing environment you provide. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were effusive about how safe and well cared for they feel.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I looked closely at the impact of improvements made to the teaching of mathematics and phonics and how well teachers are stretching pupils, especially in key stage 1. I also explored how effective the governing body is at holding leaders to account and how rigorously leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work. I reviewed the approaches you have to supporting pupils who have barriers to their learning, including those having had a negative experience of education to date. In particular, I focused on attendance rates. I reviewed safeguarding procedures and practices and explored the school's overall approach to safeguarding.
- Governance is much stronger this academic year, and governors' close and robust monitoring means they have a crystal clear understanding of what needs to happen next for the school to move forward. For example, governors evaluated the mathematics curriculum effectively and requested that the school found additional time for mathematics teaching. Pupils now have the opportunity to apply their mathematical understanding at a deeper level. They learn well from discussing mathematical concepts with each other and from evaluating practical approaches to solving problems.
- Across the school in mathematics, pupils are developing their ability to apply their mathematical skills at a greater depth. Work in pupils' books and results from regular tests show that pupils are learning from their mistakes and developing higher-level skills in mathematics. The school's information based on these tests

indicates that in 2017 results in mathematics will rise in the key stages 1 and 2 national tests.

- Following some weaker results in phonics, leaders have made substantial changes to phonics teaching since the start of the academic year. These include training all key stage 1 staff in a new approach to teaching and also delivering phonics in small groups based on ability rather than age. The impact of new approaches is rigorously and regularly checked by the headteacher responsible. There is strong evidence that Year 1 pupils' phonics scores will improve substantially in this year's screening check. Pupils who read to the inspector were able to blend sounds into words confidently and read accurately words that did not follow standard phonetic patterns.
- Most-able pupils are well served by the new approaches to reading which enable them to develop higher-level reading skills and make connections between reading and writing. You recognise that this approach has benefited key stage 1 pupils' spelling more than that of pupils in key stage 2. Some pupils in key stage 2, who can craft their writing confidently, do not always apply their phonic knowledge well. As a result, they do not always spell familiar words correctly. You have strong plans in place to improve this.
- As part of streamlining your approach to assessment, you have recently introduced termly tests in English and mathematics, which you use to track pupils' progress. You have a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making and the knowledge, skills and understanding they have gained. However, you agree that there is more work required to ensure that the new approach enables pupils with academic potential to make the very rapid progress of which they are capable.
- You have worked closely with pupils and their families to improve attendance and ensure that pupils feel positive about their experiences of school. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator successfully provides bespoke support and care for pupils who join the school with specific barriers to overcome. One parent commented: 'The dedication and warmth of the teachers is readily visible and my child has made excellent progress; he also settled very quickly indeed. Equally impressive is the sense of community around the school and great interaction between staff and parents.' As a result of the positive environment, bespoke assistance and nurture provided, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently stands at 97.87%. This figure is well above the national average for all pupils' attendance in 2016.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- changes to streamline the school's approach to assessment support those pupils with academic potential in making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you both, a number of middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and one other governor. I also made a telephone call to the school improvement officer for the Diocese of Oxford. I observed learning in all classes. I heard eight pupils read, spoke with them about their experiences of school and looked at their work. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, as well as safeguarding policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 written comments on free-text. I also considered 53 responses to the pupil survey and two responses to the staff survey.