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Miss Alexandra Symondson
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Dear Miss Symondson

Short inspection of Longborough Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment in September 2016, you swiftly established an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You used this information effectively and decisively to rapidly improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Together with an effective senior leadership team from across the North Cotswolds Schools' Federation (NCSF), you continue to take the necessary action in challenging staff and holding them to account. This is resulting in the transformational effects seen around the school and in lessons. The high expectations of you and other leaders are reflected in pupils' work as well as in their behaviour, conduct and attitudes.

Together with other school leaders, you have implemented necessary change and rigour in the school's systems and processes, such as in checking and following up the attendance and punctuality of pupils. You have managed these changes skilfully so that pupils understand their importance and recognise the benefits these changes are bringing. For example, pupils told me that 'We need to work harder but lessons are fun!' Pupils also enjoy the supportive and nurturing ethos which emanates through the relationships seen in the school. This is a happy school where pupils show respect and courtesy towards each other. Pupils are taught to value each other and respect differences. For example, a group of pupils whose view was typical told me, 'We believe we should be kind to one another.' Pupils and staff strongly reflect the school's values through their various interactions across the school day.

Since the previous inspection you have taken effective action to ensure that teaching is more challenging and 'lively'. Staffing changes have brought about a revised approach to teaching and learning so that pupils are more active and involved. For example, Years 5 and 6 have used the playground to measure angles as well as for learning about perimeter and area. Pupils also enjoy the good range of trips and visits, such as to Oxford University. These events not only spark their enthusiasm and curiosity but also raise their career aspirations and hopes for the future. You have made significant improvements in the organisation and use of the environment in the early years foundation stage, especially outdoors. This is helping to speed children's progress so that the children are better prepared for Year 1.

You have ensured that focused training and professional development for staff is strongly improving their confidence and subject knowledge in providing high-quality teaching and additional support in mathematics, particularly in improving pupils' reasoning skills to deepen their understanding. However, this has only very recently started to take effect. In addition, pupils do not always use and apply the range of their phonics knowledge and skills to improve their spelling in written work. This is still too variable across the school, where fundamental errors in common spellings can prevent some pupils from reaching the standards they are capable of.

Despite the considerable improvement in pupils' attendance since September 2016, you and other leaders, including governors, must ensure that minority groups such as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils attend school in line with their peers to be even better prepared for the next stage in their learning and over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other senior leaders have established a strong culture within the school that puts safeguarding children at the heart of your work. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records, including pre-employment vetting and checks, are robust and detailed. For example, your staff induction checklist provides an effective way to ensure that all staff are recruited and trained appropriately. In addition, the well-planned approach to professional training for staff and governors means that those working in the school are vigilant and aware. Staff know what to do to keep children safe from harm and hazards. You ensure that staff take immediate and effective action to look after children and follow up any concerns assiduously. You are also tenacious in working with other professional agencies and challenge them to act in the best interests of children when you feel there is a need to do so.

Pupils feel safe and know what to do in a variety of situations to keep themselves safe. For example, they have a secure understanding of how to stay safe when playing or learning online. They know how to respond in the event of a fire. Pupils know what bullying is and are adamant that it does not happen in this school. However, they are also sure that if any anti-social behaviour or bullying should occur, it would be dealt with swiftly by staff, in whom they have great confidence.

Pupils also feel that their emotional well-being is looked after. They speak confidently about the 'worry box' and report how staff diligently check and respond to any entries pupils make. All staff, including teaching assistants and the parent support adviser (PSA), play a role in keeping children safe and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry concerned the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school to ensure that pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to changes and effective training, teachers have a good understanding of the national standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They are taking effective steps to support and challenge pupils, including the most able, to meet and exceed these standards. Pupils' workbooks show that standards and pupils' progress have improved significantly, especially since September 2016. This is because you have successfully raised expectations of both staff and pupils.
- You hold teachers to account through high-quality professional dialogue where you identify vulnerable pupils and what they need to do to improve. Teachers challenge pupils and build effectively on pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. This includes effective planning for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, as we agreed during the visit, leaders and teachers are not always precise enough in identifying barriers to key skills, knowledge and understanding for some pupils. This slows the progress of a small minority of pupils. Pupils are showing a range of improving mathematical skills, especially in arithmetic and in using and applying numbers generally. However, they still lack confidence in reasoning, justifying and forming hypotheses to deepen and improve their mathematical thinking. This is preventing some pupils from working convincingly at the highest standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of the school's provision and teaching to raise standards in phonics. This is because, despite the very small numbers of pupils, the performance of the school in the 2016 Year 1 phonics screening check fell dramatically. Current pupils in Year 1 are now consistently meeting the standards expected for their age. Furthermore, all pupils have now met the standard in key stage 1, including those who needed to catch up in Year 2 (which includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities). You have revised the teaching of phonics, and provided extensive training for staff. As a result, teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the national benchmarks at Year 1 have improved. Pupils are confident in reading books and other text appropriate for their age and have the technical knowledge to recognise common spelling patterns that form words. This is enabling pupils to recognise, use and apply rules to break words down and read them appropriately. Pupils are confident in reading tricky words and being able to read nonsense words such as 'bleme' and 'dephew'. However, across the school gaps or weaknesses continue in how some pupils apply phonics and spelling rules to

help them in their writing. As a result, some persistent errors in spelling still prevent pupils from reaching the standards they are capable of in writing.

- My third key line of enquiry was the quality of provision and teaching in the early years, particularly in mathematical development. This is because in previous years, the children have not attained as well in mathematics as they have in reading and writing. Following an 'overhaul' in the Reception Year and additional training for staff, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Assessment information is accurate. Staff use it effectively to plan and design appropriate learning activities for the children. They are transforming the learning environment so as to challenge the children to be independent thinkers and apply a variety of skills across the curriculum. For example, in the outside area, the children use a range of number lines and resources, such as skittles, to help them learn to count and play with numbers. However, despite the recent improvements, mathematics is not prominent in the learning environment (especially indoors). This reduces opportunities for the children to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of meaningful situations and contexts, or in play.

My fourth line of enquiry looked at how well leaders are improving pupils' attendance. This is because, in 2016, comparisons with national data showed that the poor attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities put them within the lowest 10% for absence nationally. Since your arrival, you have been relentless in improving pupils' attendance and punctuality. This is because you fully understand the link between pupils' attendance, achievement and future well-being. You have taken a range of well-conceived steps and measures to work with other staff and colleagues, including the PSA, to work intensively with parents and families. You closely monitor and track pupils' attendance and intervene robustly where you have concerns or questions. As a result, attendance has improved significantly over the course of the academic year. Currently, overall attendance is above the national average. This improvement in attendance for other groups has been impressive, including a rise of 24% for disadvantaged pupils and an increase of nearly 9% for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there is more to do to improve the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils as well as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils can use a variety of strategies, including their phonic knowledge, to spell correctly in their writing
- pupils can explain, justify and reason effectively to reach the highest standards in mathematics

- pupils' attendance continues to improve, especially the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and inspection activities and I worked extensively with you and other leaders across the whole day. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment and vetting procedures and recent audits. I reviewed evidence for reporting children missing education. Together, we visited lessons in the Reception Year and key stages 1 and 2 to evaluate the effectiveness of provision. This involved scrutinising pupils' workbooks and talking with a range of pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with three representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of governors' visits. I talked with Year 5 and 6 pupils and listened to them read. I sought a range of views about safeguarding arrangements across the spectrum of inspection activities. I took full account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the staff and parent surveys.