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Mrs Lisa Moorhouse  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Moorhouse

### **Short inspection of Dry Sandford Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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.**

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team are ambitious for the pupils in your care and passionate to improve the quality of provision at Dry Sandford. You provide a clear focus on achieving the highest quality of teaching and learning which is recognised and greatly valued by staff, pupils, parents and the local authority. Pupils are articulate, confident and display very positive attitudes towards learning, their school and each other. They apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are given and take pride in making their work the best it can be.

Dry Sandford is a small rural school which offers a particularly nurturing and inclusive community atmosphere. The school is a hive of activity, where pupils develop a strong sense of belonging. From Reception class onwards positive relationships between pupils and staff foster an aspirational culture in which pupils are keen to excel. You have a strong community spirit, and families appreciate the warmth of this small village school. One parent commented for many by saying:

'As a military family who have to relocate often, I am overjoyed to finally have found a school where both of my children can grow and flourish. The employment of Mrs Moorhouse [as headteacher] has been a tremendous addition to the school. The change is incredible; the opportunities, the liaison with the community, the care, the ethos, the learning inspiration...'

During your last inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of your school, including: the effective monitoring of teaching in lessons; strong relationships between staff and pupils, promoting positive behaviour; and the provision for groups of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These continue to be key strengths of the school. The inspector also identified a need to improve the progress that all pupils, particularly the most able, make in reading and for teachers to ensure that pupils have time to respond to feedback and improve their work. Leaders and governors have responded well to these areas for improvement. Working to share teachers' approaches and to moderate pupils' work across your partnerships with other schools has brought about improvements to teaching and learning. In addition, you and other leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and have provided teachers with resources and training. As a result, all groups of pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

You are highly reflective and this is very apparent in your detailed self-evaluation of the school, which is carefully considered. You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement to teaching and learning and are taking the right actions to achieve them. Leaders rightly prioritised raising standards in mathematics this year and staff have worked well as a team to achieve these. You are aware that there is more to be done to ensure greater consistency of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. The wider curriculum has many strengths but you are aware that there is more to do to ensure that pupils receive greater and more consistent challenge in science and the humanities.

Governors are a professional and very effective team who use their detailed understanding of the school to offer useful support and challenge to leaders. They are kept well informed through regular visits to the school and via leaders' detailed tracking and assessment information. Governors value their strong links and communication with parents and the local community. They are currently involving staff, parents and pupils in developing a renewed vision and aims for the school with a view to developing a shared long-term strategic vision. Leaders and governors are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that the school website is fully up to date and meets all requirements, including the publication of the latest school policies. They are currently working to achieve this.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders keep watchful oversight on all pupils, especially those who require additional support from time to time. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, there is a culture of vigilance and detailed records are kept. There are clear, well-understood procedures and processes in place to manage safeguarding requirements. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level and so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. This includes awareness of radicalisation. Governors are knowledgeable and work closely with senior leaders to ensure that the work to keep pupils safe is given high priority and meets current requirements.

The school's safeguarding policy is kept under regular review and adheres to the latest government guidance. Further checks, including those undertaken by governors, augment the school's work in this aspect. Parents agree that the children are well looked after and kept safe. One parent noted, 'I always feel that the staff really care about the children.'

This year you have worked hard to improve overall attendance and, from a low point in 2016, it has risen to just above the national average. You recognise that some groups, including disadvantaged pupils, have had high absence rates in the past and have worked closely with outside agencies and the families to support individual improvements. However, leaders and governors are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that this group's attendance improves to match that of their peers. Bullying and discrimination are extremely rare. Almost all pupils and parents report that children feel safe and well looked after at Dry Sandford School and they know who to go to should they have any concerns. As several of the pupils told me during the inspection, 'The best thing about this school are the friends that we make here.'

### **Inspection findings**

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
  - the progress pupils make in Reception and Year 1
  - how effectively teaching and assessment enables the most able pupils to make strong progress and how effectively reading skills are developed across the school
  - how well leaders have improved the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - the quality of learning in the wider curriculum.
- Leaders work hard to ensure high-quality provision in the Reception class and are rightly proud of the well-planned and stimulating learning opportunities provided, particularly those in the outdoor learning areas. High-quality questioning from teachers and teaching assistants ensures that children are engaged and motivated through a range of activities. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and collaborative play with others in their class. They make good progress and develop communication, literacy and mathematical skills that prepare them well for key stage 1.
- Strong teaching with a clear focus on developing children's phonics skills underpins the good progress that pupils make in reading. Improved proportions of pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 and all pupils do so by the end of Year 2. In 2016, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were in line with or above national average figures. Leaders and governors have ensured that reading is promoted well at Dry Sandford. Pupils value the improved range of reading books on offer and 'The Dovecote' school bus as a learning and reading area. Consequently, pupils are able to confidently demonstrate their reading skills, reflect on the

progress they have made and happily engage in discussion about their favourite authors.

- Teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to draft and refine their work and to produce high-quality extended writing. Key stage 1 and 2 pupils' books demonstrate the strong progress that they have made in writing from their starting points this year.
- Leaders rightly prioritised improvements to mathematics teaching this year and ensured that teachers had access to appropriate training and resources. As a result, the teaching of mathematics has improved across the school. Visiting the classrooms, it is quite apparent that teachers regularly promote reasoning skills and verbally they encourage pupils to engage in deeper thinking and reflection. However, leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to ensure that more challenging tasks and activities are routinely offered to the most able pupils.
- Staff at Dry Sandford know each pupil particularly well. Understanding their individual needs, teachers and teaching assistants adapt tasks to ensure that learning is appropriately pitched. Effective planning enables leaders to ensure that all available resources are deployed to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that these groups make strong progress over time.
- Overall attendance has improved over time and is above national figures. Aware that last year the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was well below average, leaders have taken appropriate actions to address this. As a result, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved this year. However, more needs to be done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils as a group attend in line with their peers.
- Leaders have ensured that a rich and broad curriculum is in place, with a wide variety of high-quality enrichment experiences. Pupils enthused about the wealth of sporting and other clubs, visiting speakers and activities on offer and value pottery and swimming. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well and pupils speak with confidence about different faiths and cultures. However, pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not as consistently high in science and topic work as they are in English and mathematics. Pupils, particularly the most able, are not set sufficiently challenging tasks which require them to problem-solve and think as deeply in science and the humanities as they do in English and mathematics. Although enrichment is impressive, pupils' progress is not yet as strong across the curriculum as it is in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are provided with still higher levels of challenge in mathematics with regular opportunities to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills

- teachers provide more consistently challenging activities, promote deeper thinking and improve the quality of pupils' work and their depth of learning in science and humanities
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to improve.

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

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, middle leaders, other staff and members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Jointly with you, I visited all classrooms to look at teaching and learning and made a short visit to assembly. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books and listened to a small group of pupils read. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and around the school, and had a meeting with a small group of pupils. I took into account 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. I also considered the views represented in nine responses to a staff survey and 12 responses to a pupil survey. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.