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Mrs Selina Davies  
Whaddon Church of England First School  
Stock Lane  
Whaddon  
Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire  
MK17 0LS

Dear Mrs Davies

### **Short inspection of Whaddon Church of England First School**

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2018, 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have wasted no time in developing very high-quality teaching and learning for every pupil in your school. You have worked tirelessly to improve the skills and knowledge of your staff and challenge any underperformance. All staff enthusiastically plan and deliver a high-quality curriculum and track pupils' achievements diligently, making sure that any extra help that pupils need to catch up is effective and provided promptly. For example, teachers choose to run booster classes before the start of the school day, to ensure that pupils make good progress across all subjects. Consequently, pupils achieve well, making very strong progress from their different starting points.

Your work is highly valued by everyone. Pupils love coming to school, and talk enthusiastically about their learning. They very much appreciate taking responsibility for their own learning. They confidently investigate different ways of finding solutions to problems by making their own choice of resources and, as one pupil said, 'giving it a go'. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school; all those who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey would recommend the school to other parents. Staff have great respect for you and your

clear knowledge about what is effective teaching and learning. They enjoy working at the school and are committed to giving all pupils the very best education.

The governing body is effective and reinvigorated under the leadership of the recently appointed chair. Governors support and challenge you effectively and hold you to account for pupils' outcomes. They share your passion and ambition for making the school the very best that it can be. The governing body has worked with you to ensure that the school is securely established at the heart of the local community. Like you, they believe that even though Whaddon is a small school, it can achieve as highly as others.

One of your most significant achievements has been the shaping of an inspirational curriculum. Pupils thrive and develop a love of learning through a 'child-led' approach, which supports their development in all areas of learning, by enabling them to make decisions about how, where and what they will learn. The school's learning environment is very rich, with a wealth of resources that are easily accessible, supporting pupils to make choices about their own learning. Pupils at the school are taught how to make choices and are encouraged to develop their independence. For example, in early years, there is a 'rolling snack bar'. Instead of all the children stopping for a snack at a specific time, they chose when they want one. This helps children to understand their own bodies, manage their own time and eat when they need to. Children peel their own fruit, pour their own water and enjoy sitting in a shady spot to talk with one another. You are currently working to extend the child-led approach to Year 2.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school. You have been successful in maintaining these strengths. You have addressed the areas the inspector identified as requiring improvement, notably improving the way in which pupils receive feedback from staff so that they can improve their work. Adults and pupils hold very effective learning conversations during activities. Consequently, feedback is immediate and pupils make strong progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Working with your governors, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have highly detailed and effective record-keeping systems. Staff meticulously record any concerns and this enables you to make detailed and swift referrals to other agencies, when necessary. You are rigorous in your pursuit of information and action from others and are not afraid to make strong representation on behalf of pupils, when you feel that more could be done.

The culture of the school ensures that safeguarding has the highest priority. Pupils feel safe and know that they have adults in school who will listen to them. Parents agree that their children are very well cared for at school. One parent wrote, 'This is a caring, warm school which places the child at the centre of everything.'

Health and safety procedures are thorough and governors carry out regular checks to satisfy themselves that high standards are maintained. The school has been

recognised by the local authority for its excellent practice in this area. Pupils feel safe and have a well-developed understanding of how to manage risk effectively. For example, because adults have modelled how to use hammers and nails safely, pupils confidently work with a selection of tools to build their own models of transport.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked at: the effectiveness of safeguarding; the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on pupils' progress; and the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance.
- You are a very effective leader. You ensure that your staff fully understand the learning needs of every pupil and do whatever it takes to give them a good start to their education, while preparing them well for the world beyond school.
- Staff accurately teach new knowledge, skills and concepts and then pupils are set challenging tasks to move learning on. This is highly effective as pupils are skilled at choosing the resources they need and stretching themselves. Staff make very careful checks on pupils' learning and are highly skilled at asking the right questions to challenge and support pupils.
- Your focus on outdoor learning, and enabling pupils to choose where to learn to suit their interests and preferences means that they really enjoy their learning. We saw very high levels of collaboration and autonomy in your forest school, with pupils utilising all areas well to support their learning. The freedom to explore motivates them to solve problems both independently and collaboratively. Adults are very skilled at intervening and guiding pupils, but they also know when to stand back and let pupils discover for themselves.
- Children in early years make very good progress. Staff have thought carefully about the resources and experiences offered to promote children's early language skills. Consequently, children write confidently, talk about their learning enthusiastically and enjoy reading books. A group of children were enjoying a story with their teacher and were very keen to point out the question marks and speech marks. The teacher used this opportunity well to check that the children understood the purpose of the symbols. As a result, the children's knowledge and understanding of grammar grew.
- Outcomes in the phonics screening check have increased significantly over the last three years. In 2017, all pupils reached the expected standard by the end of Year 1. As a result, pupils read well.
- Pupils make very good progress in key stage 1, with a high proportion of pupils working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attendance throughout this year has been above the national average and there has been no persistent absence. You are consistent in challenging poor attendance rigorously to ensure that pupils come to school punctually and regularly. You have an accurate overview of attendance, which you check weekly. Consequently, you spot any unusual patterns of absence early and address these by speaking to parents.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the highly effective curriculum provision in early years and in Year 1 is further developed in Year 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Varnom  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the teacher with responsibility for English, five governors (including the chair of governors), and a representative from the diocese. I had a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with six pupils to listen to their views about the school and talked to many more during the day. Together, you and I observed learning across the school and scrutinised pupils' work with the leader for English. I took account of 21 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 free-text comments, and I spoke to 12 parents at the start of the day. I considered the views of five members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement and your self-evaluation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment and background checks on all adults working in school.