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Mrs J Patterson
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Dear Mrs Patterson

Short inspection of Brightwalton CE Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 June 2016, 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have brought stability to the leadership and provided the enthusiasm and energy to make important changes to the school. Some parents describe you as a 'breath of fresh air', recognising your impact so far. You have also established important systems that ensure teachers are more accountable, receive training and focus wholeheartedly on pupils' learning. By raising expectations and supporting improvements to teaching, you have enabled staff to feel appropriately challenged and rewarded by their work. Consequently, staff, parents and governors share your aim to provide an education of the highest quality to every child.

The school is welcoming and a place of many opportunities. New pupils have 'buddies' who help them to find their way around. One child said, 'As a small school, we welcome new people'. Pupils behave extremely well in and out of class. Many parents commented how happy their children are at school, reflecting the caring and supportive environment. Almost all parents would recommend the school to others. Parents and pupils speak highly of the curriculum and other experiences made available to them. All pupils in key stage 2 proudly represent the school in a sporting competition before they leave the school. The school is often a competitor in county sports finals. There are plenty of after-school sports clubs, plays and musicals too. Topics such as 'King of the castle' and 'A smooth ride' are interesting to pupils. Special curriculum events such as science week motivate pupils further.

Several pupils mentioned excitedly how they enjoyed seeing Tim Peake's launch into space at a nearby science centre.

Pupils' achievement is good. The very large majority of children reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year and are well prepared for Year 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 check on phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) has risen since you joined so that the very large majority acquire this important knowledge. Last year, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 increased. Over time, pupils' attainment in key stage 2 has been above the national average. Standards and progress in mathematics were a particular strength last year. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still work to do. In 2015, few pupils in Year 6 made better than expected progress in writing. The proportion exceeding the standards expected for their age in writing was similar to the national average. Likewise, at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was no better than that of others nationally. You know that pupils can do even better.

When you joined the school in April 2014, you set about addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have ensured that middle leaders are more effective in developing and improving teaching and the curriculum. You have rightly focused on strengthening the quality of teaching. This includes ensuring that lessons provide sufficient challenge for all groups, including the most able. As a result, all groups of pupils are achieving well. However, you recognise that not all teachers get this right all of the time to enable pupils to make outstanding progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a key part of the school's culture. Staff take these responsibilities seriously because, as you said, 'Keeping children safe is a serious business'. You regularly check that guidance and practice is up to date, making ongoing improvements to strengthen your work. Governors keep a close eye and ensure that requirements, such as recruitment checks, are met. The emotional learning support assistant provides extra support and care to some pupils to improve their attendance, confidence and readiness to learn. Pupils' attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disabilities, is high because you have high expectations of pupils' attendance. You work closely with the local authority to challenge families of pupils with lower attendance. Incidents of bullying or discrimination are very rare. Pupils are confident that teachers will help if they have a problem. Consequently, parents recognise, and pupils say, that they are safe and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness that they have agreed with the local authority. You have used this well to establish effective checks on teaching and learning and identify the right priorities for improvement. For example, after a dip in pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2014, you rightly focused on improving

teaching and learning in key stage 1. As a result, attainment at the end of key stage 1 increased to above the national average last year.

- Governors are very effective. From the outset, the governing body has worked closely with you to improve their work. They continue to do so using the annual governor development plan and sharing examples of best practice from governor training. Through the streamlined committee structures, governors provide a high level of challenge and support. Governors use pupils' progress information extremely well to identify what needs to improve and flexibly adjust their focus on it to ensure success. For example, governors maintain close oversight of the progress of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. At appropriate intervals, they question the impact of additional support to ensure pupil premium funding is used effectively. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.
- There are clear expectations of middle leaders. You have also ensured that they have received the necessary support to play a part in improving provision. Using information from their checks on the quality of teaching and learning, they provide helpful feedback to teachers who then make improvements. As a result, middle leaders have made some effective changes such as ensuring pupils have regular science lessons and that teachers measure pupils' achievement in science.
- Governors check the impact of middle leaders' work on pupils' progress. These leaders attend governors' meetings to explain their actions to improve teaching and learning. Some leaders can describe how they have improved pupils' achievement. However, not all middle leaders are able to explain the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes.
- Staff ensure that children in the Reception class have access to activities that cover all of the areas of learning and use assessment information well to identify children's next steps. For example, one adult prompted some children to make a prediction before counting the strawberries that they were sharing among friends. One child attempted a large number, 'fifty hundred and two'. Gently, the adult showed the children how to count correctly. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points. This year the proportion of children reaching a good level of development and those exceeding expectations increased. Nevertheless, the proportions of children exceeding the standards expected for their age are too inconsistent. Leaders have not yet set clear expectations for the achievement of the most able children in the early years.
- The early years teacher has implemented new systems to support children's learning and raised expectations of their writing. Children write regularly for a clear purpose with the teacher and this enables them to secure this essential skill. Recently, children have written letters to the parents, inviting them to come to watch their assembly. This and similar exercises have enabled children's attainment in writing to rise this year. However, indoor and outdoor activities do not always stimulate children's writing enough. This limits the opportunities that children have to further this skill.
- The English leader has introduced a new curriculum for writing that enables pupils to apply their knowledge from reading to what they write. Pupils write for a range of reasons and for a clear purpose. For example, key stage 1 pupils were writing a report for two aliens, 'Pod and Dusty', to teach them

about something pupils were experts in. Pupils were highly motivated to include all of the important features about topics such as sailing, gymnastics and the village fete. Across the school, pupils' books show that teachers have all implemented this curriculum. As a result, pupils, including the most able and the disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in writing.

- Pupils have some opportunities to write in other subjects. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils wrote extended versions of the nativity in a religious education lesson. However, sometimes teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in these lessons are not high enough. Furthermore, teachers do not always exploit these opportunities to provide effective practice of writing skills.
- The school values support pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and promote British values well. The diocese has supported leaders in implementing these across the curriculum. Pupils recognise the benefit of values such as positivity. One pupil said, 'I'm trying hard to be more positive to my friends about their work and it's helping'. As a result, pupils demonstrate effective and appropriate attitudes to learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are clear expectations of what the most able children in the Reception class can achieve
- pupils, including those in the early years, can develop their writing skills effectively across the curriculum
- teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all subjects
- middle leaders use pupils' progress information to demonstrate effectively the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

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 West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, middle leaders, governors, a group of pupils, and a representative of the local authority. I also spoke to a representative from the Diocese of Oxford on the telephone. I visited three lessons or parts of lessons, two of these with you. I looked at work in pupils' exercise books. I considered 27 responses to Ofsted's

online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 comments. I also spoke to parents and took into account one letter from a parent. Nine responses to the staff questionnaire and 37 responses to the pupils' questionnaire were considered. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. A range of documents were evaluated including the school development plan and safeguarding records.