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Mrs V Hutchinson
Headteacher
Marcham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
Morland Road
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Dear Mrs Hutchinson

Short inspection of Marcham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school with determination and thoughtfulness. With your senior leaders, you have developed a clear vision for improving the school. Your ambition is shared by governors and staff at all levels. You lead 'from the front', working collaboratively and transparently. This approach enables staff to flourish. The majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school and the way you lead it. One parent said, 'This is a lovely school, well led with a caring, family feel at its heart.'

Marcham Primary School is a very happy place to be as a pupil. Pupils are welcomed warmly by staff as they arrive each day. Relationships between pupils and adults are kind and respectful. Pupils are fully engaged by the opportunities provided and, as a result, achieve well. Because of your leadership, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Resources are well organised and pupils use them well to develop their skills across the curriculum. Teachers model new concepts to their pupils in an engaging manner. For example, a Year 1 teacher modelled odd and even numbers by using a pair of odd socks, much to the pupils' amusement. Teachers use questioning wisely to challenge pupils to think more deeply. Pupils are also encouraged to work independently. At the same time, staff cleverly target support where it is needed most, enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils work well together, challenging themselves to succeed when attempting to work out problems. They are encouraged to 'have a go' and

persevere. There is a real buzz to learning. Pupils appreciate the exciting curriculum and the interesting topic themes they study.

The visits to classrooms we undertook together confirmed your view that pupils achieve well. Looking at a range of pupils' books from across the school backed this up also. Pupils do especially well at reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard at Year 6 is above that seen nationally. Alongside this, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the standard expected in the phonics screening check has greatly improved since the last inspection and is also above the national average. However, you know that pupils need to develop their writing skills further. You also agreed with me that mathematics at key stage 1 needs to be improved, and you have clear plans to address this.

In 2014, inspectors also asked you to improve leadership so that those responsible for improvements evaluate the results of their actions. Leaders evaluate the school accurately. You know what the school does well, as well as the priorities to develop. Middle leaders new to their roles have begun to evaluate their actions well. However, checks on the impact of initiatives do not always happen often enough to make any necessary changes during the course of the year.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Procedures and day-to-day routines are thorough. Importantly, there is an embedded culture of keeping pupils safe. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to protect pupils. They know what to do if they have concerns. Governors challenge and support this vital part of school life extremely well.

The vast majority of parents and pupils are positive about the high level of care and support available. Pupils are actively involved in developing practice, for example by presenting ideas to the governing body on ways to tackle any bullying. All parents who spoke to me during the inspection felt that their children were safe in school, as did all staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the achievement of pupils in writing, the achievement of key stage 1 pupils in mathematics and the quality of the school's wider curriculum.
- Leaders have identified the development of writing as a key priority for improvement since the disappointing outcomes at the end of the last school year. Since September, the school has worked with local schools, carried out additional staff training and reviewed writing interventions. These initiatives have been successful. Progress in writing is accelerating and there is a clear progression of skills across the age range, although pupils are not always given the opportunity to write at length, which sometimes limits them showing their full potential. We agreed that evaluating what is working more frequently would be helpful in

identifying any adjustments that need to be made.

- Leaders have also identified that mathematics outcomes at key stage 1 could improve. They have taken robust action in this area by working with a local mathematics partnership. All staff, including teaching assistants, have received training, and new policies for calculation are fully implemented. These actions have had a positive impact on teaching and learning in mathematics across key stage 1. Teachers have embraced the training and show confidence in modelling concepts. Pupils are using resources with confidence, and this is helping to develop clear understanding. Work in books shows that pupils are working at an appropriate level and making good progress, although opportunities for pupils to focus on reasoning skills are not yet consistent. Again, we agreed that more ongoing checks on what is working would be helpful.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum this year. It is well designed, appropriately broad and balanced. Care has been taken to ensure that it matches Marcham's pupils' needs. Pupils are particularly positive about what they learn and the way that teachers make learning enjoyable. For example, following a trip to the Oxford mosque, Years 3 and 4 pupils produced effective persuasive brochures and posters about how valuable their trip was. The pupil survey also shows that the majority really enjoy their learning.
- The school's extra-curricular offer is wide-ranging. Alongside football and netball clubs, pupils also have the opportunity, for example, to learn to play bridge and join in salsa dance sessions. Over 85% of pupils who replied to the online questionnaire indicated that they take advantage of clubs and enjoy the additional experiences offered by the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are provided with opportunities to write at length
- approaches to teaching mathematics in key stage 1 include further opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills
- they make more regular checks on the impact of actions they are taking so that adaptations can be made to improve outcomes further.

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

Felix Rayner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector visited classrooms, reviewing pupils' progress over time and talking to pupils about their learning. He observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day. Years 5 and 6 were on a residential visit at the time of the inspection. The inspector scrutinised a broad sample of books from both these year groups. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four other governors, and a representative of the local authority. The inspector talked to parents at the start of the school day, and considered 29 replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying free-text messages, 19 replies to the staff survey and 14 replies to the pupil survey. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the single central record of pre-employment checks, safeguarding documents, pupil progress information, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and records of visits by the local authority.