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Mrs Alyson Frost
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Dear Mrs Frost

Short inspection of Great Milton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy lead the school with passion and enthusiasm. You are determined that all pupils will receive the best standard of education and care possible. Governors, too, are ambitious for the school. They make regular visits to check the school's ongoing improvements. As a result, leaders and governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses precisely. You have built a strong staff team whose members are ready and willing to support the school in its next steps. They enjoy working at Great Milton. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to work at the school.

Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school because other children are friendly. They work well together and support each other in their tasks. They love many aspects of school life, including playing football and the range of after-school clubs on offer. Great Milton is a happy school. As one parent wrote, 'The most important thing is that my son is so happy. He bounces out of bed every morning and is excited to learn.'

The last inspection featured many strengths, including high attainment and good behaviour. These remain highlights of Great Milton. Provisional outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 show higher proportions of pupils meeting and exceeding the expected standards than seen nationally. However, results in writing are not as consistent as in reading and mathematics.

Leaders now aspire to replicate these high standards of attainment across the wider curriculum, especially for the most able pupils.

Leaders have taken effective action to address the improvement areas from the previous inspection. Your focus on developing the curriculum, so that pupils greatly enjoy their learning, has been especially successful. Teachers plan lessons that spark pupils' interests. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and show high levels of engagement in lessons. They take great pride in their work. Leaders are not complacent, though, and recognise that, while subject-specific skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science are taught very well, they are not taught so well in other subjects. This is a particular issue for the most able pupils.

Treating all equally and fairly is important to the 'Great Milton family'. You have created an inclusive culture where all members of your community feel welcome. Pupils act with respect for each other. As one pupil said to me, 'It is OK to be different here.' However, pupils' exact understanding of diversity and equality in modern Britain has weaknesses. In addition, leaders and governors have not ensured that the school's equality statement is up to date and that the school has suitable equality objectives.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Day-to-day routines are secure and any necessary actions are completed without delay. Staff are highly vigilant and, as a result, there is a strong safeguarding culture at Great Milton. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work or volunteer in the school are fully in place. Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders work well with outside agencies to make sure that families and pupils get the help they need.

Pupils whom I spoke to say that they have many adults in the school they can talk to if they have a concern. One pupil commented, 'If we need help, we talk to teachers. They come up with solutions to make it right again.' Pupils know that they are listened to. They are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet. One parent commented, 'The atmosphere in the school is a busy hub of learning, where the children feel happy, safe and part of their "school family".'

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: how effectively leaders have improved the progress that pupils make in writing; the effectiveness of the curriculum; and to what extent pupils are given tasks at the right level of difficulty.
- To improve the progress that pupils make in writing, leaders have introduced a wide range of teaching strategies which are having a positive impact on standards. For example, in a Year 2 writing lesson, pupils wrote with confidence

and stamina when producing their own version of a story. Pupils across the school know how to improve their writing, using the school's 'fix it' approach. Presentation is good. There are many examples of pupils writing to a high standard in subjects other than English. However, pupils' progress across the school is variable. Boys do not make as much progress as girls. The school has, rightly, made ensuring that all pupils make strong progress in writing a current focus for improvement.

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. As a result, pupils work hard and take great care in their work. Pupils have many opportunities to represent the school in sports teams, for example, or as part of the school choir. The science curriculum ensures that pupils develop the skills they need to ask questions, observe and measure. Pupils' science books show that they are mastering investigative and practical skills, coupled with strong knowledge. However, scrutiny of pupils' books showed that subject-specific skills in other subjects are less well taught. Consequently, pupils, particularly the most able, are less challenged and make less progress across the wider curriculum than in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils understand the importance of respecting and accepting everyone, and articulate a deep desire to treat everyone equally. However, as leaders acknowledge, opportunities to learn about equal rights, discrimination and prejudice are not routinely built into the curriculum.
- The previous inspection report asked leaders to ensure that pupils' work was not too easy or too hard. During my visits to lessons and while looking at pupils' books, I could see that pupils are routinely challenged in their English and mathematics lessons. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress at Great Milton. However, we agreed that not enough is done to raise the level of challenge further for the most able pupils across all subjects in the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make stronger progress in writing to ensure that higher proportions of pupils meet and exceed age-related expectations in the subject
- the curriculum is further developed, so that all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged to improve their subject-specific skills across the curriculum
- the work the school does to promote equality, diversity and pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is more effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. With the senior leadership team, we looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 108 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to representatives from the diocese and the local authority on the telephone. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements and held a telephone conversation with the designated officer for safeguarding from the local authority. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; attendance information; information about pupils' progress; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.