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Mrs Jane Tailby
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tailby

Short inspection of Middle Barton School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 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 February 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, your staff and governors are passionate about ensuring that the school continues to improve. For example, the redesigned curriculum gives pupils the opportunity to experience a wealth of interesting subjects. It helps to prepare them well for their future lives. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' personal qualities based on your school's core values.

Parents are delighted with the school. Almost all who responded to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. One parent expressed the views of many when they said, 'The school continues to go from strength to strength and my child can't wait to go to school each day.' Parents say that this village school is now the vibrant hub of the community.

Under your strong and dedicated leadership, teachers receive effective support to help pupils make good progress. When progress dips occasionally, you act rapidly. For example, you provided further training for staff when a lower percentage of pupils compared to the national average met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check last year. Staff are making good use of this training to identify precisely what skills pupils need to learn next. As a result, current pupils are now making strong progress in developing their phonic skills.

Most pupils at the school achieve well. A higher percentage of children in the early

years reach a good level of development compared to national figures. This has been the case for several years. In key stage 1, results last year in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average, with higher proportions of pupils attaining at greater depth in all subjects. Achievement in key stage 2 is improving. Pupils typically achieve similarly to other pupils nationally in reading and writing. However, last year pupils did not make such strong progress in mathematics. Most pupils currently in the school are making good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. A few pupils' books show that they are making exceptional progress. However, the school system to track pupils' achievement does not yet identify those who are achieving very well.

Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved. However, while improving, attendance rates for these pupils are still below the national average. You know that you need to continue this important work.

At the last inspection, an area for improvement was to provide pupils with more opportunities to read aloud. This has been addressed through a variety of imaginative ways, including at school productions and during assemblies. Many parents said that these opportunities have helped to raise their children's confidence when reading aloud to an audience.

The other area for improvement, at the last inspection, was to give subject leaders a greater depth of experience. You have ensured that all middle leaders are given appropriate training and support. It is evident from the good progress of pupils seen across the school that subject leaders are now effective in monitoring and advancing learning in their areas of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

In this small village school, staff know the pupils extremely well. The leadership team has rightly ensured that safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are dedicated in making sure that pupils are cared for well and feel safe. All concerns are followed up diligently and there is close liaison with a range of external agencies.

Pupils say that they feel safe at the school. All who were spoken to say that if they had any worries, they would immediately go to a member of staff or directly to the headteacher. All parents who were spoken to, or who responded to the online survey, Parent View, consider that their children are safe in this school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies are compliant with statutory requirements and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we agreed to examine how effectively leaders' monitoring of the school has supported improvements. It is clear that leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They plan carefully

to address the areas still left to improve. Governors know the school extremely well and use their expertise to hold the leadership team to account effectively. Governors are able to fulfil their roles well because you provide clear and detailed information on all aspects of school life.

- Another area of focus, during my visit, was to explore whether pupils are making good progress, particularly in mathematics. This was because pupils' progress dipped at the end of key stage 2 last year. You and your leadership team have worked hard to address this issue. Staff have received extensive, additional training. Work seen in current pupils' books indicates that most are now making good progress and are developing their understanding of mathematical concepts and problem-solving well.
- We agreed to examine how those who are most able, especially girls in key stage 1, are progressing. These pupils do well. It is clear that you and your staff support all of the most able pupils well. The most able pupils across the school say that they often find work challenging. However, current school assessment information does not indicate that this exceptional progress occurs. Consequently, leaders and governors do not have clear enough information about where learning is at its best and use this to improve the school further.
- We looked at whether the funding for disadvantaged pupils is well spent. In many cases it is clear that barriers to learning for these pupils are identified appropriately and funding is spent carefully to address them. This has resulted in disadvantaged pupils typically making good progress. However, for the last two years the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been lower than the national average for primary schools. While this year there have been improvements, attendance levels for these pupils are still below those of other pupils nationally.
- During the inspection, we also looked at how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs. You and your leadership team have worked hard to ensure that pupils have a variety of exciting experiences which prepare them well for their next stage of education. Many parents praise the wide range of extra-curricular clubs that are available. Pupils say that they like the opportunities they are given to take responsibility in the pupil leadership team. Musical productions enable pupils to develop their vocal and performance skills. There is a strong emphasis on the outdoor curriculum and the school makes good use of its rural location. Pupils develop a good awareness of the natural world; for example, when learning in the woods outside and growing vegetables in the school grounds. Additionally, your school gives pupils a broad understanding of the different faiths, cultures and countries in the world through its focus on global awareness.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve
- systems for tracking pupils' progress identify those who are making exceptional progress so that leaders know where learning is at its best and use it to raise achievement 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

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with pupils. I spoke to a few pupils and parents at the start of the school day and took into consideration several letters from parents and 51 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. With you, I visited all the classes and looked at pupils' books. A range of school documentation was checked including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for improvement; assessment, behaviour and exclusions information; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures and minutes of governors' meetings.