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Ms Carol-Anne McCollum  
Headteacher  
Mursley Church of England School  
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Dear Ms McCollum

### **Short inspection of Mursley Church of England School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 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 June 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You strive to ensure that all pupils are happy, motivated and challenged. Your determined and thoughtful leadership is well respected by governors, parents and staff alike – several parents described you as an 'excellent leader'. You reflect regularly on your actions to improve provision, adapting them where necessary to increase effectiveness. This approach characterises all leadership in the school.

Pupils are friendly, caring and considerate towards one another because adults show them exactly how to behave. Each pupil is known and cared for as an individual. Indeed, staff nurture each pupil and champion the needs of the disadvantaged and those who are disabled and have special educational needs. Parents greatly value this personalised approach. One parent said, 'I wouldn't want my child to go anywhere else.' Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about school. They appreciate trips to the pantomime, opportunities to learn in a planetarium and practical science workshops. One child in Reception spoke with confidence about regular lessons in the forest school, adding conspiratorially, 'We get hot chocolate!' Pupils like coming to school. Attendance has been consistently higher than the national average for the past three years.

You have rightly focused on ensuring that pupils continue to achieve well. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make good progress from their starting points. In the Reception class, a large majority of children reach a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1. Last year, most pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. The very large majority of pupils achieve the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2. Nevertheless, you have accurately identified the need to raise the achievement of the most-able pupils. Across the school, not enough pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age last year.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified two areas for improvement. You have effectively addressed both of these. Pupils know how to improve their work. Teachers all follow the school's marking policy closely. Pupils appreciate the consistent feedback, describing it as helpful. Each pupil has a clearly labelled target on their desk that they refer to often. As a result, pupils are well equipped to take the next steps in their learning. You have also ensured that pupils develop joined up writing and present their work neatly in all subjects. Right from the start, children learn handwriting so that by the time they reach Year 2, each pupil has a fluent and legible script. Pupils' books show that they take pride in all of their work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You make safeguarding everybody's priority, stating that you 'never want it to be far from our minds'. Governors maintain careful oversight of procedures and help you to check that guidance is up to date. Staff receive regular training. You keep this training under review to ensure that staff are well equipped to act in the best interests of the pupils in their care. The local authority has described health and safety practice as 'excellent'. All parents think that their children feel safe and are well cared for at school. You make improvements to safeguarding such as refining the way that you teach internet safety to ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils enjoy visiting a local safety centre where they learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of everyday situations. Two pupils gave an impressive, impromptu demonstration of safe road crossing on the playground to show what they have learned.

### **Inspection findings**

- You rightly recognise that leadership is more effective when shared. Therefore, you place a strong emphasis on training teachers and teaching assistants to play a greater role in school life. Subject leaders learn from and with colleagues in other schools. They carry out regular checks on teaching and apply their skills and knowledge well to give feedback to teachers that helps them to improve.
- You have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The local authority has worked with you to check that your evaluation of the school is correct. You use pupils' progress information well to identify

what needs to be improved and share this approach with all leaders. As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of the school's performance.

- All leaders have identified appropriate actions to take to increase the school's effectiveness. The mathematics leader has introduced regular opportunities for pupils to practise mental calculations so that they can work more quickly. The English leader has ensured that teachers ask pupils challenging questions in reading lessons that extend pupils' thinking and develop comprehension skills. The school development plan is ambitious and sharply focused on securing pertinent improvements. It sets out clearly what needs to change, when this will happen and who is responsible. The plan shows the intended impact of each action on pupils' outcomes. However, these measures are not precise and leaders do not always state explicitly the impact of their actions on pupils' learning.
- Governors provide some challenge to school leaders. For example, they check that leaders spend additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. You provide governors with detailed information about pupils' progress that enables them to ask important questions and better understand the school's performance. Governors discuss the school development plan but they do not routinely evaluate the impact of actions and use this to robustly hold leaders to account.
- You challenge all members of the school community to be the best that they can be. Rightly, you have recognised the need to ensure that pupils become resilient. In assembly, a teacher helped pupils to see difficult tasks more positively and identify ways to solve problems that they might face. The pupils delighted in watching the teacher fail to make a cake and willingly offered suggestions for where to get help. The prayer at the end enabled pupils to reflect on what they had learned and think about their own approach. Pupils' spiritual understanding is well developed.
- You set and demonstrate high expectations for all pupils. For example, you have ensured that even the youngest children have the opportunity to compete in the speech cup competition that promotes valuable speaking and listening skills. Staff follow your example and are equally ambitious for pupils. They were often heard saying to pupils, 'I think you can do more.'
- Changes to teaching have ensured that the most-able pupils are sufficiently challenged. Teachers work closely with support staff to provide appropriate teaching to different groups of pupils. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, no time was wasted because a teaching assistant provided the most able with a suitably demanding activity while the rest of the class rehearsed learning from the previous day. Similarly, in a Year 2 English lesson, the teacher worked with the most-able pupils to develop their writing so that they could show, rather than tell how a character was feeling. Across Key Stage 1, high

expectations prevail. Pupils' books show that they can routinely choose from tasks labelled as: hard, harder and hardest. Pupils' work is appropriately challenging. As a result of all of these changes, an increasing proportion of pupils are exceeding national expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 1 and Year 2.

- In the Reception class, adults provide a wide range of activities, both inside and outside, that capture children's imagination and promote all of the areas of learning. Nonetheless, the early years leader has accurately identified that children in the Reception class achieve better in some areas of learning than others. Therefore, she has ensured that the right activities are in place to help children develop skills more evenly. For example, children enjoy 'funky fingers' activities such as manipulating play dough to improve their physical development.
- The early years leader has ensured that all adults know how to challenge the most-able children. Adults talk to children and intervene appropriately in their play to introduce new ideas. Two girls were in the role play area, dressed as doctors – complete with glasses so that they could 'see well'. A new 'patient' was introduced to them with a stomach ache and a temperature. The 'doctors' set to work, noting that the patient also had sore hands. Staff have higher expectations of what children can achieve and seek ways to extend their learning. As a result, more children are achieving above national expectations for their age across the areas of learning.
- You value close working with parents and endeavour to immerse them in the life of the school. You hold regular information evenings and workshops such as 'grammar for grown ups' to show them some of the ways that their children are taught. You invite parents to attend events such as the speech cup competition to celebrate pupils' achievements. Parents have frequent opportunities to contribute to and applaud their child's learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- work continues to further improve the achievement of the most-able pupils across the school
- governors hold leaders to account more effectively by systematically evaluating the impact of the school development plan
- all leaders can explain the impact of their work 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 Buckinghamshire. 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, the early years leader, the English and mathematics leaders, the vice-chair and two members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. We observed teaching and learning in three classes. We scrutinised pupils' work together. I attended an assembly. I observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and around the school. I spoke to pupils about their experiences and views of school. I took account of 18 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire. I also spoke to four parents at the start of the day and took into account an email sent in by a parent. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, and policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.