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Mrs Vania Eaglen  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Eaglen

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Farnham Royal CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019, 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 November 2015.

#### **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 great ambition for the pupils in your care, as seen in your belief that 'good is never good enough'. You have a clear and accurate view of what the school does well and what could be better. There is a strong, collaborative approach to improvement in the school. Middle leaders are dynamic and knowledgeable, contributing well to improving the teaching in their subjects. Staff views are valued, and leaders are considerate of their staff's workload. As a result, staff morale is high. Parents are also enthusiastic about the school's work and the staff who work there. One parent wrote: 'The headteacher and all members of staff go above and beyond to ensure that the children begin their journey to academic and personal success well. I would recommend the school without hesitation.'

The school is an inclusive and welcoming place. The pastoral support available to pupils ensures that they feel safe and are ready to learn. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils work hard in lessons, listen attentively and learn well together. The school's ethos, 'founded in faith, focused on family and fulfilling future potential', guides both the curriculum and the daily life of the school. Pupils celebrate and respect differences, support each other, and are well prepared for the next steps in their education. Pupils enjoy coming to school, telling me how friendly everyone is.

Governance is strong. Governors are highly skilled and very clear on their roles. They bring a wealth of expertise to the school and, as a result, support and challenge leaders well.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' presentation of their work and the fluency of handwriting. You have been very successful here. Pupils take a great pride in their work and handwriting is neat. Leaders were also asked to ensure that they identify and eliminate gaps in pupils' knowledge, particularly in mathematics. Since the last inspection, you have reviewed how you assess and track pupils' progress. Leaders carefully analyse assessments and meet with teachers to identify pupils who are not making enough progress. Any pupil who falls behind in their learning has timely intervention, focused on the right things, to help them catch up.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose, and day-to-day routines are secure. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff are fully in place. Leaders and staff know their pupils well and understand what signs to look out for to keep them safe. As a result, any worrying changes in behaviour, or concerns, are noted swiftly. Communication between staff is strong. Leaders work successfully with a wide range of outside agencies to support pupils and their families. Leaders know local risks well. They ensure that staff stay up to date with safeguarding knowledge through weekly staff newsletters and regular training, including the 'Prevent' duty. Consequently, leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well.

Pupils have a strong knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online, confidently explaining how to report unkind messages, and the importance of keeping personal details and passwords confidential. Pupils say there is always an adult to talk to if they are worried. They told me there is hardly any bullying, but if there is, 'teachers always stop it'. Parents, too, appreciate the warm and nurturing environment of the school. As one parent commented, 'The staff have created a "family" atmosphere and make it a wonderful place for our children to grow.'

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: the progress pupils make in mathematics; how effectively teaching challenges the most able pupils; and how well pupils learn in science.
- Leaders have responded well to the below-average progress Year 6 pupils made by the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Leaders have introduced new strategies which have strengthened the teaching of pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving. Work in pupils' books shows that most pupils practise their calculation skills well and can apply their learning to a wide range of real-life contexts and problems. Pupils are able to use mathematical vocabulary precisely to explain their thinking. Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress in mathematics. However, sometimes assessment is not used well enough to

provide work that is well matched to pupils' prior knowledge and skills. As a result, work is sometimes too hard for pupils with below-average starting points, which limits their progress.

- During my visits to lessons, and while looking in the pupils' books, I saw clear evidence that teachers have high expectations of what the most able pupils can attain in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to probe pupils' understanding well. Pupils, including the most able, know how to improve their work because of the clear expectations their teachers have of them. Nevertheless, while there are some examples of the most able pupils being stretched well in other subjects, this is not consistent. For example, in geography the most able pupils are not given the opportunity to think deeply and apply subject-specific skills to a range of contexts.
- Science is taught well at St Mary's. Following disappointing science attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, leaders revised how science was taught throughout the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils' scientific enquiry skills and their knowledge are planned progressively so that pupils' understanding develops well. As a result, pupils learn well in science, make strong progress, and standards have improved. Pupils excitedly spoke about the 'cool, fun experiments' they do. For example, a group of Year 4 pupils told me about a recent experiment investigating the effect of different types of washing powders on a jam stain. Their explanation of how they ensured that the experiment was fair showed me how well they understood the importance of only changing one variable. Pupils' work shows that they are mastering investigative and practical skills, coupled with a secure understanding of key concepts and strong scientific vocabulary.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment well in mathematics so that work for pupils with below-average starting points is well matched to their needs
- teachers raise their expectations of what most-able pupils can attain in subject-specific skills in the wider curriculum.

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

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. We visited classrooms to observe pupils learning, talk to them and look at their work. With your senior leadership team, we looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 32 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. I took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 52 responses to the pupil survey. I also had a meeting with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school. At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were attending a residential activity week so did not contribute their views.

I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with two middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; a recent parent survey; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.