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Mrs E Holmes  
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Dear Mrs Holmes

### **Short inspection of Crazies Hill CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 March 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 lead by example, modelling appropriate levels of care to pupils in all aspects of your work. Parents appreciate the warm welcome each morning as you personally greet pupils, come rain or shine. Pupils are keen to come to school. They are pleased to be members of this community and proud to know each individual pupil by name. Parents rightly highlight the many strengths in the school's provision including the high levels of care afforded to their children, the engaging curriculum and exemplary standards of behaviour.

Governors, staff, parents and pupils appreciate the improvements that you have instigated since the last inspection. The expansion of the Reception classroom, bespoke office spaces for administrative staff and newly refurbished computer facilities, have enhanced the learning setting for staff and pupils alike. You place high importance on an orderly, safe and appealing environment.

Governors acknowledge the improvements you have instigated to the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 2 in 2015, pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and every pupil met the standards expected for their age in these subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher levels at Key Stage 1

and Key Stage 2 in 2015 was above that seen nationally. Recent improvements to the quality of teaching have had a marked impact on accelerating pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In current cohorts, more pupils than in the past are making rapid progress and exceeding the expectations set for them.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to help the most-able pupils in Years 1 to 4 to make faster progress and to make greater use of the outdoor area in order to further promote children's social, language and creative development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leaders have addressed these aspects efficiently so that:

- the majority of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in current cohorts are making good progress and many make rapid gains because tasks provide a high level of challenge
- in the early years, outdoor activities are more purposeful than in the past and have a stronger focus on developing children's early writing and number skills. Well-judged support from the local authority has contributed well to improving this aspect.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils feel safe. They are confident that teachers care well for them, commenting that 'Adults notice if even a tiny bit of sadness crosses our faces'. They say that everyone is kind and are particularly proud of how well pupils know one another, across the full range of age groups.

The school makes appropriate checks on all adults, including volunteers and temporary staff, to confirm their suitability to work with children. Staff and governors receive appropriate training. As you retire at the end of the summer term 2016, governors have begun the process of recruiting a new headteacher. They are making good use of safer recruitment training, applying their knowledge and understanding to ensure that the appointment of a replacement headteacher follows statutory guidelines.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Persistent absence is low. However, there is some disparity as disadvantaged pupils have higher rates of absence than other pupils in the school. More work is needed to ensure disadvantaged pupils attend habitually.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have implemented a new assessment system successfully. This has allowed you to gather information more systematically about how well pupils learn. In addition, you have fully implemented the new National Curriculum. Teachers understand your expectations and are highly committed to ensuring pupils succeed in all aspects of learning.

- Training has contributed well to developing teachers' expertise, particularly in meeting revised curricular expectations, such as those in computing. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use control technology effectively to manoeuvre vehicles. They are adept at programming and can even build in functions that help a plough manage uneven terrain.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that work is appropriately challenging for pupils of all abilities. Teaching assistants are highly skilled, using questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding. In mathematics, teaching assistants offer useful guidance, ensuring that pupils who display hesitation can grasp new ways of working successfully. This helps pupils, including pupils with special educational needs or with a disability, to make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils who met the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics check is above that seen nationally. (Phonics refers to letters and the sounds that they make.) Staff training has contributed well to developing teachers' skills and expertise. Consequently, pupils make good progress in the development of early reading skills and are suitably prepared for the challenges of Year 2. Because of well-judged actions to improve this aspect, you have had a marked impact on raising standards.
- Assemblies are special times where staff and pupils reflect thoughtfully together. A positive school ethos prevails and there is a tangible sense of unity. Pupils listen well, displaying high levels of reverence and respect. Staff are skilful in providing a breadth of opportunities that deepen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. During my visit, pupils considered how they could take a 'leap forward' in their lives, listening attentively, thinking deeply and offering thoughtful responses. These occasions foster positive relationships, successfully developing pupils' self-belief, ambition and emotional well-being.
- The teaching of writing is a strength. Pupils write for a variety of purposes including instructions, stories and advertisements. They are ambitious in their choices of vocabulary, painting a vivid picture for their reader. Pupils use complex writing techniques from an early stage, such as using simile in Year 1, to bring texts to life. Pupils spell accurately, and carefully join their handwriting; they are rightly proud of the high standards of presentation they accomplish.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The teaching of science is a particular strength. Pupils conduct scientific investigations on a regular basis. They say they enjoy these first-hand experiences to explore how the world around them works. Pupils are able to predict, reason and draw conclusions precisely. In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils talk animatedly about recent investigative work, such as their recent experiment to test different materials and their efficiency at muffling sound.

- The school is a hub of activity. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer, including football and archery. Other opportunities, such as the judo club before school run by an outside provider, are popular. Governors also immerse themselves in broader aspects of school life, regularly attending visits with pupils, reflecting the benefits of such experiences back to the full governing body.
- Standards in the early years have risen steadily and greater use is now made of the outdoor area to promote children's basic writing and number skills. A local authority adviser has offered helpful support in developing this aspect of the provision. However, despite a wider range of outdoor activities the proportion of boys who are ready for Year 1 at the end of the Reception Year is below that seen nationally. You and the governors rightly recognise that the steady improvement seen so far now needs to accelerate.
- Children in the early years choose from a wide range of activities to develop their number and early writing skills. The role play area, currently set up as a travel agency, enthralls children to write, as they slip with ease into the role of travel agent. Many were able to complete booking forms competently, delighting in their efforts. However, adults do not seize on opportunities to discuss children's efforts with them and push their learning on further.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils receive helpful additional support. Additional support in lessons reaps rewards as pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and make good progress. However, too few make accelerated progress, as their attendance at school is not always regular enough.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils get on well with one another and they say that bullying does not happen. They have high levels of trust in each other and the adults who care for them. Pupils are quick to affirm that if you fall over there is always a gaggle of pupils ready to pick you up. Equally, on an unseasonably cold day, the inspector noted older pupils helping a much younger child fasten their coat to protect against the icy chill. They independently instigate and display high levels of care towards one another.
- You accurately recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You and the governors readily identify which aspects of the school's work are weaker. However, some of your shared priorities do not have sufficient prominence on your improvement plan. As a result, the key priorities you have identified to raise standards become muddled and lost in the detail. Sharper identification of the areas you are all working on would help you evaluate the difference you are making and the levels of urgency required.
- Governors make regular visits, including the Chair of the Governing Body, on a weekly basis, and know the school inside and out. They are adept at focusing on what needs to improve, regularly holding robust discussions with leaders. Governors acknowledge that although pupils attain good

standards in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, there is room to accelerate the progress that children make in their Reception Year at Crazies Hill Primary School. Governors are highly committed to raising standards further.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching in the early years improves so that more children, particularly boys, are ready to start Year 1 with the skills and understanding appropriate for their age
- attendance for disadvantaged pupils improves so it is in line with national expectations
- school improvement planning focuses more sharply on the areas that leaders have identified as needing improvement, such as the quality of teaching and learning in the early years.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Oxford and the Director of Children's Services for Wokingham Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I also met with six pupils in Key Stage 2 and took account of the 31 responses to the pupils' online survey. I observed learning in seven lessons, six jointly with the headteacher, and scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 21 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the views of nine members of the school team who responded to the online survey for staff. I observed pupils' behaviour on arrival at school and at lunchtime. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.