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Mr Mark Frost  
Headteacher  
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Berkshire  
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Dear Mr Frost

### **Short inspection of Micklands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 June 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 October 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 and your leadership team lead and manage the school effectively. Since taking up the post of headteacher three years ago, you have steered the school with vision and drive. You are determined to ensure that the continuous improvement of pupils' academic and personal development lie equally at the heart of the school's work.

You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders closely monitor the impact of each development in the school's provision to ensure that it is having a positive impact on pupils' progress.

The development of staff is a strength of the school. Leaders offer staff opportunities to shadow middle and senior leaders, alongside the provision of appropriate training. Consequently, you have staff ready to step-up and take on leadership roles, when the need arises. Staff are highly complimentary about this support for their career development. Emails from staff thank you for helping their development. Their appreciation was also evident in the highly positive responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

You are keen to fully engage with all parents and carers and have introduced a regular online question and answer session. Parents send in questions about all aspects of school life and your personal responses to these are subsequently

streamed on the internet. This has been highly successful, especially to engage those parents who are reluctant to come into school.

There have been some recent changes in the governing body. However, through careful recruitment, the chair of the governing body has ensured that current governors possess a wide range of relevant skills, knowledge and expertise. This enables them to carry out their roles effectively. Governors are highly supportive of the school and hold leaders to account. For example, they have recently challenged leaders over the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have addressed the recommendation from the last inspection to develop the role of middle leaders. Middle leaders now play a full and active role. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, not only within their own areas of responsibility but across the school as a whole. Their increased involvement in all aspects of leadership has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders told the inspector that, unlike in the past, they now feel empowered to influence the school's continued development.

The last inspection also asked the school to provide more opportunities for pupils to understand and use mathematics in real-life situations. Following a review of the mathematics curriculum, staff undertook training to increase the incorporation of mathematics in other subjects. There is now clear evidence in pupils' books and teachers' planning that all pupils are regularly using and applying mathematics in a variety of contexts. This has been extended further through activities in which pupils apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving in the school's grounds. Work in books and the school's progress information indicate that the majority of current pupils have a greater understanding of how to apply mathematical thinking to solve real problems.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. At the start of the inspection, I received eight letters from pupils, all written at home, telling me about their school. One pupil wrote, 'The teachers are kind and when we need help, they help us. They teach us well.' This view was endorsed by the pupils I spoke to during the inspection, as well as the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Nearly every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said they would recommend the school to others. One parent, echoing the views of many, commented that: 'This is an amazing school, as well as promoting good academic learning and having high aspirations for all the pupils, the school has a strong ethos of developing the whole child.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding procedures are effective and fit for purpose. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils' safety and welfare are high priorities. All staff receive up-to-date training about safeguarding issues and safeguarding is regularly reviewed in staff meetings. Safeguarding is also a regular topic in your weekly newsletter to parents.

Parents, pupils and members of staff are positive about how well the school looks after its pupils.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They say that although bullying happens occasionally staff are good at dealing with it. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe on the internet and know the importance of keeping personal information private.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the following specific areas of the school's provision: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the progress of disadvantaged pupils; attendance; and the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- Until recently, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils at the school, although improving, was not as strong as the progress of other pupils. Leaders are now carefully monitoring the progress of disadvantaged pupils and setting them ambitious targets. As a result of careful monitoring and the adjustments made to their support, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are now making progress that is broadly in line with that of other pupils. This was evident in the school's own progress information and in pupils' books. Research carried out by leaders shows that many disadvantaged pupils have little experience of rich vocabulary. As a result, leaders have prioritised approaches to ensure that pupils have experience and understanding of a broad, enriched vocabulary and encourage them to use it. This has had an immediate, positive impact on the quality of writing, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. In addition to the support for their learning, disadvantaged pupils receive carefully targeted social and emotional support. The impact of this has been to greatly reduce the number of behavioural incidents and associated fixed-term exclusions. However, leaders are aware that the strong progress currently being made needs to be sustained to enable disadvantaged pupils to fulfil their potential.
- Overall attendance is improving and is now broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is above the national average. It is particularly high for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have introduced many strategies to improve attendance. These include letters to ask families what support the school can give to improve their children's attendance, and the introduction of weekly and termly awards for classes with high attendance. These strategies are having a positive effect. The school's current attendance information shows that the number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing. It also shows that those pupils who are still persistently absent are now attending school more regularly than had previously been the case. However, leaders acknowledge that more work is required to ensure that attendance continues to improve.
- You have recently reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it is broad, balanced and engaging. The revised curriculum is planned to deliver engaging lessons across all subjects. These experiences are further enhanced by themed days or weeks which enrich pupils' learning, for instance eco day, Roman day and science

week. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities they have for learning outdoors. These have increased in the revised approach to delivering the curriculum. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were fully engaged in their learning and keen to explain about their 'enterprise work'. This topic enables them to develop an understanding of what is required to produce and sell a product. They also learn the importance of careful costings and making a profit. The importance of this was highlighted as pupils told me all profits made would go towards their end-of-term barbecue. You are currently reviewing a system for assessing pupils' progress in each subject to ensure that teaching is effective in achieving its intentions. The system also needs to accurately track pupils' progress without it becoming too onerous for staff.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to strengthen and closes the attainment gap with others
- persistent attendance continues to improve, and persistent absence reduces.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Reading. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Macdonald  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior staff, subject leaders and governors. Together, we visited nearly every class to observe pupils learning, talk to them and look at their work. We also looked at the work on display around the school. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

I considered the school's documentation on pupils' progress and attainment, safeguarding and governance. During breaktime, I spoke informally to pupils to gather their views of the school. There were 49 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire, and I received eight letters from pupils. I took account of the views of parents by analysing 142 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 137 free-text comments. I also received four letters from parents and considered the 28 responses to the staff survey.