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Mr Kevin Ford
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ford

Short inspection of Great Marlow School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2017 with Charlotte Wilson, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up the post of headteacher in September 2016, you have provided determined leadership aimed at ensuring a high-quality education for every pupil, regardless of their ability or circumstances. Your staff support your vision and work hard to maintain the school's strengths and improve the school further. There is a caring and stimulating ethos in the school, which enables pupils to make strong progress and achieve well. However, you and your leadership team are not complacent and you are ambitiously implementing plans to help pupils, particularly the most able, make even greater progress.

Pupils behave very well. They are kind and respectful towards each other and their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of their school environment. They appreciate the wide range of clubs and trips on offer. Leaders ensure that all pupils can access these enriching experiences. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school, and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance. The attendance of most disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs/and or disabilities is improving.

Since the last inspection, leaders have developed meticulous systems to assess and track pupils' progress regularly. This helps ensure that any pupil who is at risk of

falling behind is spotted quickly. Prompt and useful support helps these pupils achieve well. For example, pupils who find reading difficult are given appropriate individual support and quickly begin to make rapid progress. Effective training helps teachers plan effectively for the needs of pupils of varying abilities. Pupils now make more consistent progress in all subjects.

Subject and pastoral leaders monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress effectively. As a result, leaders and governors know the strengths of the school. You also know where further improvement is needed. For example, you recognise that pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable need to make more rapid progress.

Governors know the school well and they provide strong support and challenge to you and other leaders. Morale is high at your inclusive school. Everyone shares your ambition that all pupils achieve their very best and develop into well-rounded citizens. Parents speak highly of the school and almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff receive regular training about how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Before appointing staff, leaders carry out all of the required employment checks. These are then recorded meticulously on the school's single central register.

There is a strong culture of vigilance and support to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and practices because they receive regular training and updates. Governors have undertaken all the necessary safeguarding training.

A dedicated team of staff works with determination and sensitivity alongside parents and external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Parents say that their children feel safe in school. Pupils state that staff are approachable and that they know an adult they can turn to if they have any worries. Pupils appreciate the concern that staff members have for their welfare and well-being.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors focused on the following lines of enquiry: the effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly for the most able pupils; the attendance and progress of vulnerable pupils; pupils' achievement in science; the effectiveness of teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; how effectively leaders are developing an inclusive ethos in the school.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement in science has improved and continues to improve. There has been an effective focus on improving teaching

and learning. Teachers rightly speak highly of your 'outstanding teacher intervention programme'. They are now skilled in planning lessons that cater well for pupils with varying starting points. For example, in a practical science lesson, lower-ability pupils completed experiments with great care and worked well in groups to record accurate results. Examination results, teachers' assessments of current pupils' achievement, together with evidence in pupils' work, support school leaders' evaluation that the quality of teaching is now consistently strong. As a result, pupils achieve well and say that they enjoy science.

- Leaders are beginning to act to ensure that the curriculum provides well for the most able pupils. The proportion of most-able pupils successfully taking a modern foreign language at GCSE is increasing. The science department is very enthusiastic about introducing separate sciences at GCSE so that the most able pupils are better prepared for post-16 courses. As a result, teachers are sensitively supporting the most able pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to take, and experience success in, challenging subjects both at GCSE and in the sixth form.
- The leadership team has introduced a wide range of effective approaches which help disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Leaders and teachers now monitor closely the progress of all pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement. Consequently, teachers are swift to provide effective additional help to support pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Progress of the most disadvantaged pupils now closely matches the strong progress of other pupils at the school. Some pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable are well supported in their personal development. However, you correctly recognise that for these pupils, their academic progress could improve further.
- The arrangements for identifying and helping pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effective. Teachers work closely with learning support assistants to ensure that these pupils achieve well. Leaders suitably adapt the curriculum for individuals who need extra help, particularly at GCSE.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers strengthen the academic support given to the small group of pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, so that their achievement continues to improve
- plans to provide a more challenging curriculum for the most able pupils are further developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Turner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and the deputy headteachers to consider the school's self-evaluation and discuss improvement since the last inspection. Further meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders, and other staff. I met with the chair of governors and the chair of the curriculum and standards committee.

Inspectors undertook observations of teaching and learning, accompanied by you or other members of the senior leadership team. We reviewed pupils' work from different key stages. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils, as well as speaking informally to them during lessons and around the school.

We looked at the school's website and a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding records and the single central record. We also looked at the school's attendance, behaviour and exclusions information. Inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires completed by 90 members of staff and 280 parents, including accompanying written comments.