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Mrs Natalie Wilson
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Dear Mrs Natalie Wilson

Short inspection of Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2018, 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 outstanding in May 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your school gives children a superb start to their education. Staff develop children's wonder in learning very effectively. This is typified by a conversation I heard at lunchtime, when some three-year-old children were talking about the human body. One said, 'Did you know that my body is mainly made up of water. If you don't drink enough you will get dehydrated.' Another child said, 'We were all chimps once.' To which another replied, 'I have a skeleton in my body.'

Staff at your school have a deep understanding of the principles of early years education. Every day brings new surprises and challenge. Staff know about the importance of providing experiences that fascinate children. One example of this was when staff helped children to build a large 'volcano' in the sand pit. Once all the children were a safe distance away, vinegar and bicarbonate of soda were added together and poured into the volcano. Children were fascinated to see the resulting fizz as the 'lava' flowed down the volcano's sides. In this one activity, you gave children a basic understanding of volcanoes and chemical reactions.

Parents are resounding in their praise for the school. They consider that communication between home and school is excellent. Parents praise the weekly Sunday newsletters that celebrate the learning of the past week. They like to read about the exciting events planned for the week to come. Over two thirds of the

parents at your school responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View. All of them would recommend your school to another parent. A typical comment was: 'This is an outstanding school. Each child is treated as an individual and with respect by the staff. The teaching is excellent and we are continually impressed by the leaps and bounds my son has made in his learning.'

The vision and drive of your leadership team is inspirational. Staff are dedicated to providing the very best standard of education. They are fully supportive of your high aspirations for the children. All who answered the questionnaire consider that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching team.

One of the reasons that children do so well is your expertise in developing children's communication and language skills. You make good use of research and have been involved in projects with Oxford University. These include research on the link between mathematical language and conceptual development in young children. Your school has also taken part in an early language development project with Oxfordshire local authority. Staff use the findings of research to very good effect. Every opportunity is taken to immerse children in a language-rich environment and extend their vocabulary skills. The impact of this is that children can express their views very clearly. One parent explained that when asked about their school, the child had responded, 'My school is the best in the whole universe, and is better than the biggest planet.'

At the previous inspection, the area to improve was children's mark-making and early writing development. This has been very well addressed. Children make excellent progress because staff provide irresistible invitations for them to write. For instance, during the inspection several children took part in a post-office role play. They were engrossed in making sure that all the Christmas cards were written and delivered in time.

As headteacher of this school, you have ensured that all staff are highly skilled in understanding where children are in their learning. You have also used your expertise to provide school improvement support and moderation advice for Oxfordshire. You play a valuable role in improving nursery education in the local area. For example, you lead on early years in the Headington Partnership of local nursery and primary schools. Your school improvement plan shows that you aim to develop links with more schools. This is so that you can spread your outstanding practice and have a greater impact on improving nursery education across a wider area.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff know the children well. They are fully committed to ensuring the safety of children. Staff are well trained and know the correct procedures if they need to communicate any concerns. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that children get help quickly when needed. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire were confident that their children were safe.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Although attendance is not statutory, your team follows up any absence very effectively. As a result, attendance is around 98%. There are rigorous systems in place to check the suitability of all staff and visitors who work with children.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to check on the effectiveness of leaders on improving the school since the previous inspection. Since becoming headteacher in 2016, you have built on the school's strengths. You and your staff are constantly looking at ways to enhance the provision even further. You have the highest expectations that staff will apply their considerable skills to help each child flourish. Governors are very effective. They have an excellent understanding of how children are progressing.
- An area of focus during my visit was to check the progress that children make from their starting points. I found that from broadly average starting points children make exceptional progress in all areas of learning. This is because staff are so well attuned to where each child is in their development. Planning is meticulous. Staff know exactly what activities are needed to move learning on. Detailed learning journeys track the considerable progress that children make. For example, when working with numbers children routinely count up to 30, and some are able to count to 100. Books are everywhere in your school, children delight in talking about stories with their key worker. Children have a good understanding of the letters in the alphabet. Those who are most able are helped to blend letters together to read simple words.
- We agreed to check the progress of different groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged. I found that leaders make good use of early years pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged children make outstanding progress. You have clearly identified the early barriers to learning which sometimes hinder the progress these children make. Funding is used to provide additional support and a range of enrichment activities, such as yoga. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make equally strong progress as their peers because they are well supported by their key worker to participate in all the activities.
- My final line of inquiry was to consider the impact of the curriculum on children's learning and progress. The experiences you provide are memorable and enthuse children. For example, on one occasion staff from a local farm visited with ponies, sheep and geese. Children were enthralled as they watched the animals wandering around the school's outside area. Staff are always alert to children's interests. For example, after children developed a fascination with buses, they took them on a local bus trip. You have a clear focus on developing children's awareness of the natural world. Children visit a forest school every week. They have exciting opportunities to explore and learn about nature and the seasons.
- There are highly effective transition arrangements between this school and the on-site Reception class that is part of St Andrew's Church of England School in

Headington. Staff work well together, and the impact of this is that children from your nursery are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- you develop more links with other schools so that you can spread your outstanding practice still further.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, governors, and the headteacher of St Andrew's Church of England Primary School. A telephone conversation was held with the local authority advisor. Informal discussions were held with parents and children at the start of the school day. The 51 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 51 free-text responses were considered. Views expressed by 17 staff who had responded to the staff survey were reviewed. Together, you and I visited classes and looked at children's learning journals. We visited the breakfast and after-school club. A range of school documentation was checked, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for improvement; assessment and behaviour records; the single central record of pre-employment checks; the school's policies and procedures; and minutes of governors' meeting.