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Mrs D Moulds
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moulds

Short inspection of Oakthorpe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2015, 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your effective strategic leadership and high ambitions for all pupils have ensured that the school has continued to move forward. You are well supported by the deputy headteacher and governors. You work together effectively to ensure that there is a relentless focus on the school's key priority areas. All staff are committed to the school's vision where pupils are encouraged to 'dream, believe and achieve'. There is a shared determination that all pupils should be given the best chance to succeed. This is evident by the way that you ensure that pupils work in a stimulating environment and have access to high-quality resources. Consequently, pupils enjoy school life, attend regularly and make good progress.

Pupils are enthusiastic, confident and successful learners. Teachers plan lessons carefully around topics that are well chosen to inspire and motivate the pupils. In Years 3 and 4, topic work on Roman myths was used to inspire pupils' writing. In Years 5 and 6, pupils were fascinated by an original Second World War recipe book belonging to the grandad of one pupil as they considered reliable sources of primary evidence. In the early years, children were excited about exploring nocturnal animals in the role play area using torches and binoculars. As a result, pupils contribute enthusiastically to discussions, listen attentively to different viewpoints and generally persevere with tasks.

You, your deputy and middle leaders are effective in your roles to improve standards. Middle leaders manage their areas of responsibility well. For example, the

literacy leader has undertaken an extensive analysis of the 2015 Year 6 reading tests following a dip in attainment. This has enabled her to identify swiftly and accurately areas where improvements are needed.

At the last inspection, the inspector commended the school for providing a caring environment where pupils enjoy learning, make good progress from the start, behave well and develop good personal and social skills. The school has maintained, and in some cases developed, these positive aspects. Inspectors also identified the following areas for improvement: challenge for the most-able pupils, increased opportunities for independent learning and more opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school.

The school has tackled these areas successfully. The most-able pupils are provided with more challenging work so that they can achieve the high standards of which they are capable. This is especially evident in writing where they demonstrate advanced writing skills. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to work independently. They particularly like to work in teams to solve problems. You recognise the importance of involving parents in their children's learning. Parents enjoy opportunities to attend assemblies, share lunch and visit classrooms to share learning together. The recent family forest school day provided an excellent opportunity for parents and children to work together building dens and learning about responsible campfire cooking.

You track carefully the progress of each pupil, as well as particular groups of pupils, using well devised systems. The number of pupils is very small and consequently, figures for how well pupils are doing can vary a lot from year to year. However, your information about the test results for 2015 shows that almost all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, made at least the progress expected of them in mathematics and writing. You have accurately identified reading as a key priority because pupils did not make as good progress in reading as they did in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. Safeguarding and behaviour policies are updated regularly and meet all current requirements. All staff know the procedures to follow and understand their own responsibilities. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. Parents expressed confidence in the school to follow up any concerns. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or medical conditions receive high levels of care; detailed health care plans have been agreed with parents.

Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and know who to talk to should they have any concerns. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not exist at Oakthorpe Primary. School records confirm this. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe because of the strong family ethos where older pupils look

out for younger ones. Pupils are taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet and know the immediate actions to take if they view anything that causes them concern. The recent opportunity for parents to express their views, or voice concerns, about the school's challenge to any potential extremist views has been welcomed and, as a result, parents have every confidence that the safety and well-being of their children is paramount at Oakthorpe Primary.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Consequently, your plans for improvement are appropriate and focus on the correct actions.
- Governors are committed and ambitious for the school. They have a wide range of skills and expertise. They are well informed about all areas of the school's performance. They are effective in holding you and your team to account for pupils' progress and attainment. They set aspirational targets and expectations for you and for staff.
- Pupils excel in writing. Writing is embedded throughout the curriculum and pupils display high levels of confidence in writing for a range of purposes. Children in the early years have good opportunities to develop their early writing skills both indoors and outdoors. Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is of a very high standard. Two thirds of pupils gained the higher Level 5 in the writing assessment at the end of key Stage 2 in 2015. This is significantly higher than the national average. This is a direct result of the action you have taken.
- Pupils enjoy reading and were keen to read to me. Younger pupils use their phonic knowledge well to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils explained the work in their reading journals to me. These help pupils to reflect on what they are reading through undertaking a range of tasks which they choose from an extensive list. However, reading standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 were well below those in writing. You have begun to address this through introducing additional reading sessions for pupils in Key Stage 2 who have gaps in their knowledge, providing more opportunities for pupils to read and involving parents more in supporting reading at home. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to read aloud so that teachers can check their understanding of punctuation and encourage reading with expression. Older pupils told me that they do not have regular opportunities to use the library in order to broaden their reading experiences at home and in school.
- Children in the early years enjoy a very positive start to school life. Most children make at least typical progress and some make good progress. Although most children start school without the skills and knowledge that are typical for their age, staff are alert to the fact that some children start school with well-

developed skills and experience, and therefore need more challenge. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is especially strong. This is evident in the way children settle quickly, develop independence and gain confidence.

- Pupils are courteous and well mannered. Relationships between pupils are strong. They are welcoming and polite to visitors. The code of behaviour is well understood and generally followed by all pupils. This is confirmed by the school's records which show only a few reported incidents of misbehaviour.
- Pupils' active involvement in the life of the school through the leadership council contributes strongly to their mature attitudes, high levels of confidence and sense of responsibility. They are proud to talk about developing their 'ideal selves' as they learn the skills of resilience, reciprocity, resourcefulness, reflection and responsibility. The school has recently received a Character Award from the Department for Education in recognition of this excellent work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills, as well as their understanding of British values, are well developed. Your recent visit to Beijing to make links with a school there, and the introduction of Mandarin lessons for Key Stage 2 pupils, show that you are not complacent in seeking to continually broaden pupils' horizons.
- The school is outward looking. Both you and your deputy are involved in supporting other local schools in partnership with the local authority. You play a leading role in Unity – a network of local schools. You invest significantly in overseas research to continually inform developments and find creative solutions and fresh ideas for Oakthorpe.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and you are held in high regard. All parents with whom I spoke would recommend the school to others. This is because parents value the high standards of care, support and guidance which the school provides to pupils and their families. Many parents spoke positively about the recent changes to the school website and the new class Twitter pages which they enjoy using.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- Standards in reading improve, by:
 - developing more focused reading skills throughout the curriculum
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to read aloud to bring stories to life

- ensuring that all pupils have good opportunities to read widely at home and in school.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body, and the literacy subject leader. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited all classes together to observe teaching and learning. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes, during lessons and in an assembly. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day and considered the views of 12 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and five letters received during the inspection. I considered a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, the latest achievement and attendance information held by the school and minutes of governing body meetings.