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Mrs Caroline Moore
Headteacher
Ombersley Endowed First School
School Bank
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Dear Mrs Moore

Short inspection of Ombersley Endowed First School

Following my visit to the school on 10 December 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 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 have created a culture where every pupil is highly valued and is provided with the highest standard of care. As this is a small school, you have a detailed knowledge of each and every child. You use this knowledge to good effect to make sure that the needs of all groups are fully met, especially those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. The overwhelming view of parents, staff and governors is that the school is 'one big family'. As a result, pupils are happy and achieve well.

Links with parents were judged to be outstanding at the previous inspection. This continues to be an area of strength. Many parents are from outside the catchment area but say they have chosen Ombersley First School because of the excellent care and attention provided for their children. Additionally, the reputation for the excellent support provided for pupils with special educational needs has spread and, as a result, the numbers on roll have increased. Parents actively support the school through a wide range of fundraising activities throughout the year. For example, during the inspection, parents were selling handmade chocolate houses so that the school could buy extra resources.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken appropriate action to address the areas identified. Teachers ensure that lessons move at a brisk pace and this allows pupils to get on with the tasks set. Attendance has improved and is now in the top 10% of all schools nationally. This is because pupils love school and any absences are followed up swiftly. While the published attendance figure for disadvantaged pupils is in the lowest 10% of schools nationally, this is a very small group and one pupil's absence can have a disproportionate effect on the data.

You have recognised that there are still things for the school to improve as it moves beyond good. These include sharpening the school development plan so that leaders and governors are clear about how and when proposed actions have been successful. You are also aiming to improve mathematics by ensuring that activities are set at the right level for pupils, and to improve writing by increasing the quantity and quality of pupils' work in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governing body treat safeguarding arrangements with the utmost priority. Visitors and volunteers are presented with a safeguarding advice leaflet on arrival to ensure that they know precisely what to do if they have a concern. Staff are fully trained and keep a watchful eye on individual pupils and know the correct procedures to follow. Any concerns reported are carefully recorded and appropriately followed up. You diligently follow safer recruitment procedures when appointing staff. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and records are detailed and of a high quality.

The pupils I spoke with said that they feel extremely safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe and are aware of 'stranger danger' and of the dangers of using the internet. They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. Pupils were very keen to explain the 'High 5' steps to take if bullying occurs. These are displayed in all classrooms and provide a clear and effective message. Pupils are also very clear about the behaviour policy and the coloured zone boards in classrooms. They say that behaviour has improved and that very few pupils now go into the 'red zone'.

Inspection findings

- As headteacher, you have created a united team who work well together to provide the highest standard of care and support for pupils. As a result, staff morale is high and pupils enjoy their lessons. Parents' views are extremely positive, with the very large majority of parents strongly agreeing that their child is taught well, feels safe and is happy at school.
- The school development plan outlines the school's main priorities. Although it sets out clear actions to aid improvement, it does not include a timeline for when actions will be completed, nor has any measureable criteria to determine precisely if the proposed actions have been successful. There is also no link with

the school's budget to show that funds have been allocated to achieve the identified priorities. For example, the cost of the new mathematics scheme is not shown, despite it being a considerable amount of the school's budget. Consequently, it is difficult for all leaders, including governors, to establish accurately the effectiveness of actions taken, or whether the school is achieving value for money.

- With your leadership team, you have a thorough knowledge of individual pupils. You carry out checks on the quality of teaching and regularly assess and track the progress that pupils make. Subject leaders lead training on new initiatives introduced in their respective areas and provide good support for their colleagues. While they have a detailed knowledge about how well pupils are doing in their own class, they are less knowledgeable about the rates of progress of pupils across the school. They do not always evaluate the impact of new initiatives early enough, such as the new mathematics scheme, which has been in place since September.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support to you and your leadership team. They ask searching questions and have a good knowledge of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, as they regularly visit the school. Governors set challenging targets for you as headteacher and you ensure that they are kept fully informed about teachers' performance and any proposed pay awards. Governors are also clear about the use and impact of the pupil premium grant and primary PE and sports funding.
- Teaching is characterised by lively and exciting lessons. Very good use is made of practical equipment, especially in mathematics, to support pupils' learning. Teachers ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding and develop their reasoning skills, for example, 'how have you worked that out?' They set regular homework to extend and build on pupils' knowledge and understanding in different subjects. Regular trips are also planned to bring topics to life. Teachers provide helpful guidance when marking pupils' work, which pupils diligently respond to.
- Mathematics is an area for development this year and staff are making good use of the new scheme. This is helping pupils to develop their problem-solving skills. However, on occasion, the work set is too hard for some pupils, as we noticed when we checked their books. Additionally, number formation is still not secure in Key Stage 1 as some pupils still reverse certain numbers. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading and told me about their favourite authors. Pupils' writing is also developing well, but we noticed in pupils' books that when worksheets or writing frames were used in Key Stage 2, the quality and quantity of pupils' work deteriorated.

- You and your staff place a great deal of importance on pupils' personal development and well-being. A wide range of visits, visitors and clubs all add to pupils' enjoyment of school and their social and personal development. Pupils behave well around school and are extremely polite. They have positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well. High levels of concentration and perseverance were seen when we visited classrooms, and pupils willingly discussed their work with me. Pupils readily take on additional roles and responsibilities, for example helping to look after classroom pets.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school in reading, writing and mathematics and are well prepared for middle school by the time they leave Year 4. Standards reached at the end of Year 2 are usually well above average. Although standards dipped in mathematics in 2015, pupils had still made good progress from their different starting points.
- You have a higher proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs than other schools nationally. Children are identified early in the Nursery or Reception class and this enables you to provide additional support from the outset. The deputy headteacher knows precisely the nature of each pupil's difficulty and ensures that specialist or school support is provided. As a result, pupils make good progress along with their classmates. There are only a very small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Their needs are also fully met due to the effective use of the pupil premium funding. They too make good progress.
- Children in the early years achieve well. They join school with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. The addition of the school Nursery has strengthened provision and significantly raised achievement. In 2015, three quarters of children reached a good level of development. This was much higher than previous years and is above the national average. This is because teachers plan imaginative activities. For example, when we visited both Nursery and Reception classes, children were making snow houses out of icing sugar or sugar cubes. They were totally engrossed in this activity and spoke enthusiastically about wanting it to snow this Christmas so they could make real snow houses.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school development plan identifies how and when leaders and governors will know that the proposed actions have been successful
- subject leaders evaluate new initiatives and summarise how well pupils are doing so that they are clear about where their progress is strongest and where it needs accelerating
- teachers set work at the right level in mathematics and develop the quantity and quality of pupils' writing in all subjects.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other members and a representative of the local authority. I visited all classrooms and spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school and took account of the 61 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire. Documents and records relating to pupils' achievement, leadership, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.