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Paul Parslow-Williams
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Dear Mr Parslow-Williams

Short inspection of Occold Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017, 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 September 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 lead and manage the school very well. Your vision and ambition to provide pupils with a good education have strengthened the school further. It is now securely good. All your staff feel that the school has improved under your leadership. Your evaluation of the school's performance is honest and accurate. Suitable plans are in place to improve the school. You and your governors feel that there is nothing stopping it from becoming outstanding.

Your school sits at the heart of its local community. It does a good job. Parents enthuse about it, saying that, 'Occold is an ideal village school. We're incredibly happy with it and so grateful that our children are having such a nurturing, fun and inspiring start to their school years'.

Children in Reception get off to a great start. Significant improvements made to the outdoor area and some staffing changes have enhanced the quality of provision. High-quality teaching and care ensure that your school's children are fully prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching in all key stages is good. Your staff are experts in maximising the use of space. Classrooms and corridors are rich, vibrant areas that stimulate pupils' interest. Displays of pupils' work are impressive. Careful recruitment, routine

monitoring of lessons and pupils' work, and staff training have all contributed to establishing consistency in teaching throughout the school.

The impact of this is clearly evident in the outcomes achieved by your pupils. The results achieved last year place the school in the top 40% of schools nationally. Significantly, results in writing and mathematics were in the top 25% of schools nationally. This was acknowledged in a letter from the Department for Education's regional schools commissioner. Your detailed assessment procedures clearly show that this year, pupils across all key stages continue to make good progress.

The quality of written work is exceptional. Enlisting expert support from within your governing body and your good links with the University of East Anglia helps pupils to develop a love of writing. You and your staff model good writing techniques. Suitable books are chosen for pupils to write about. You use the history and geography of the local area well to prompt ideas and research topics.

Pupils attend regularly because they enjoy school. They told me that it is a safe, friendly place to be. Your own records show there are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Almost all of the texts received from parents confirmed this. They praised the school's work, one commenting that, 'it is such a special place where all the children are cared for and the staff are brilliant'.

Your governors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses well. They told me that the improvements made since the last inspection are down to your clear, coherent leadership and total commitment to pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that pupils' safety and well-being are prioritised. New fencing around the school protects pupils from harm. The single central record is well maintained. All necessary checks are made when appointing new staff. Child protection procedures are firmly established. Detailed records are kept of incidents and concerns.

Inspection findings

- In order to find out if the school remained good, I followed a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection. These were based on analysis of a wide range of information about the school's, and pupils', performance and on the issues raised in the last inspection. My focus was, therefore, on: how effectively reading is taught, and your plans to improve it; the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage; the progress you have made in resolving the issues raised in the last inspection; what your staff do to enrich pupils' learning and ensure that their personal development and welfare needs are met; and whether pupils feel safe and free from bullying.
- Your staff work very well as a team. You invest in their professional development to help them develop their talents. Common approaches to teaching and learning

are evident in most lessons. Teachers use a range of resources, including information technology, to capture and retain pupils' attention. They encourage them to talk together before answering questions, and show their answers on personal whiteboards to confirm that they all understand what to do.

- The small number of pupils in each class enables your staff to monitor each of them closely, and intervene early to provide support for those needing help. Learning activities are matched to pupils' different abilities. This, and teachers' high expectations, ensure that, usually, the most able pupils are suitably challenged. For example, in a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils made links to Pythagoras's theorem when calculating the diameter, radius and circumference of everyday circular objects. Teachers and classroom assistants worked well together to ensure that less-able pupils benefit from effective support.
- Current assessments show that most of your Year 6 pupils are expected to meet or exceed expectations in writing and mathematics. Assessments in Years 3 and 4 show a similar trend. Reading is improving. Following a slight dip in results last year, your prompt action has begun to raise the profile of reading, and develop pupils' spelling. You have not had enough time to fully evaluate the impact of these actions. However, you feel that they are working well. Parents agree with you, one saying, 'my son's passion for reading and books has recently been reignited and I am sure this is due to his teacher's passion, excitement and positive focus on reading in class. I cannot recommend this school highly enough'.
- Outcomes for your pupils in key stage 1 are good. Significantly, an above-average proportion of pupils achieve a good level of development in their writing and mathematics. However, at times, not all of the most able pupils are fully challenged in lessons. The teaching of phonics is firmly established. Outcomes achieved by pupils in national tests have risen for the past three years.
- In the Reception class, creative use of the limited space available by your staff enriches children's learning. Staff are adept at recognising what sparks children's interest, and designing personal tasks to stimulate their curiosity. Children move with ease between teacher-led learning and child-initiated play throughout the indoor and outdoor areas. Their progress is assessed using iPads to record moments when they meet their targets. This technology enables your staff to maintain an 'online journey' of learning and update parents daily about their child's development.
- Arrangements made for Year 1 pupils to learn alongside children in Reception work well. Your teachers and classroom assistants work well together to match exploration and play with more formal learning activities. The quality of children's early writing is exceptional. Together, we observed a child in Reception recording information using numbers and words; and another pupil in Year 1 had constructed a letter addressed to her friend, and signed, 'love from'. Current assessments show that the above-average outcomes achieved last year are set to continue this year.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are sensible, well-mannered and at times, quite charming. They are respectful towards adults. Attitudes in lessons and conduct around school are exemplary. Every member of your staff strongly agrees that

pupils are kept safe, free from bullying and behave well. Parents recognise their good behaviour, one saying, 'when you go through the gates in the mornings all the children are polite, say hello and help younger ones'.

- You make full use of the village hall and playing fields to ensure that pupils lead healthy, active lifestyles, and gain a good understanding of the natural environment around them. Trips out of school are valued highly. Pupils were eagerly awaiting their visit to Cadbury World later in the week. They also told me about their enjoyment of after-school clubs in sport, art and writing, and opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument.
- I spoke with two parents regarding bullying incidents. One felt the issue with her child had been dealt with very well. The other did not. I investigated this further by examining the behaviour log, meeting pupils and talking with staff. Pupils said that arguments develop during football at lunchtimes but, overall, they feel quite safe. They also said that if issues arise, staff would help them to sort things out.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are looked after well. Your coordinator collates detailed notes about them. This helps staff to match learning to their particular needs in lessons to enable them to make good progress. One parent who met with me praised the use of 'pupil passports' to relay information back and forth from school and keep parents informed about their child's progress and welfare.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of the actions you are taking to raise pupils' achievement is thoroughly evaluated to ensure that they are leading to the improvements you wish to make in their reading and spelling this year.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, most of your staff, five members of the governing body, a group of pupils and three parents. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. Together, you and I observed pupils learning in all four teaching areas. We visited the local playing fields at lunchtime to observe behaviour during lunchtimes. I reviewed your self-evaluation and improvement plans, safeguarding policy and procedures, including the single central record, and attendance and behaviour records. I also considered 22 free texts sent by parents,

32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and seven responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.