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Mrs Pauline MacMillan  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs MacMillan

### **Short inspection of Oakfield Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 September 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Oakfield Primary is a warm and welcoming school with a strong sense of community. Pupils are happy, well behaved and demonstrate a love of learning. You and governors have sustained a strong and committed workforce where leaders' vision to improve pupils' outcomes is central to the work of the school. Throughout all year groups, leaders and teachers work collaboratively to ensure that there is a consistency in the approach to teaching, learning and assessment. The school's ethos teaches pupils how to be resilient and to take risks. There is a strong focus on pupils trying, applying and explaining their learning which permeates through the school's curriculum.

In Reception, children thrive in a stimulating environment supported by skilful adults. Strong leadership and teaching practice ensure that the school's consistent approach to teaching and learning starts here. Parents are extremely complimentary about the provision in Reception. One parent commented: 'My child has recently started in early years and has had a fantastic start to her school years. She is positive and excited when she comes out of school and does not stop talking about her day.'

You ensure that there is a focus on speaking and listening in Reception, as you identify this as an aspect that children typically struggle with when they enter the

Reception class. Children's naturally inquisitive nature is enhanced through inspirational teaching and learning, drawing on children's prior learning, which takes place in a language-rich environment. For example, one activity area invited children to investigate the crime scene featuring a wall and the broken shell of Humpty Dumpty. This activity encouraged children to extend their vocabulary, displaying labels such as 'notepad', 'detective' and 'invisible ink'.

In another area, children were excitedly searching for the wicked witch, from a story being told by the class teacher. The teacher carefully modelled language which encouraged children to look for clues to sequence and complete the story. Children were fascinated as they began to search for and find the characters hidden in the outdoor area to complete the story for themselves. As a result of your focus on developing children's language, the majority of children achieve a good level of development and make accelerated progress from their starting points. When children move on to Year 1, they continue to achieve well, particularly in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). Consequently, pupils consistently exceed national averages in the phonics screening checks.

Your, and governors', commitment to staff development has empowered staff at all levels to learn and master new skills. Leaders and teachers told me they embrace the opportunities to learn and develop their own teaching practice. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire agreed that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks.

Governors share and embrace the common vision to improve pupils' outcomes. They are fully involved in school life and carry out a wide range of monitoring activities. As a result, they have the knowledge and experience to support whole-school priorities and offer effective support and challenge to school leaders, ensuring that the school continues to raise achievement for all pupils.

Parents I spoke with were extremely positive about the school and the progress their children make, as were the majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. One parent commented: 'I feel my daughter excelled hugely in her first year. I am very happy with her progress.' Another added, 'Oakfield is a very well run school and works hard at recognising each child's strengths and really cares about each individual child.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that the necessary checks are made on all staff prior to them taking up their appointments. Any concerns about pupils are raised immediately.

You and governors have established a strong culture of safeguarding. You ensure that there is no doubt about the roles or responsibilities of all members of the school community in respect of safeguarding pupils. All relevant policies, such as child protection, behaviour, code of conduct and first aid, are cross referenced with the safeguarding and child protection procedures in the school. You ensure that

reminders and prompts are displayed clearly on the school's 'well-being' board to support staff. Induction processes and training for staff are thorough and you communicate safeguarding updates in newsletters to parents on a regular basis.

All parents who responded to Parent View say their children are happy at Oakfield. Pupils who I spoke with reported that they feel safe and that they were not aware of any bullying. They all told me they had an adult in school they could talk to if they were worried or had any concerns.

Pupils have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and how to manage this effectively. Pupils are aware of the dangers associated with the internet and know who to speak to if they are concerned. The vast majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire are confident that their children are happy, safe and well looked after, as are all staff who completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2016, some pupils in key stage 1 did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Additionally, not enough pupils made the progress they should have from their different starting points. Therefore, the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 was my first line of enquiry to ascertain that the school remained good. You explained that there were factors affecting the stability of the teaching and learning in key stage 1 during this time. You successfully addressed the instability in teaching and learning during the last academic year, so that pupils received the quality of teaching and learning that would enable them to make good and better progress by the end of the school year.
- Teachers have high expectations, evidenced in the high standard of presentation in pupils' writing and mathematics books last year and those of current pupils. In lessons, pupils engage in purposeful tasks that test their application skills in English and mathematics. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to work independently while teachers support individuals and groups of pupils when needed. Teachers continually assess pupils' understanding so that they can be moved on to make as much progress as they can. The school's own information about how well pupils achieve, and pupils' work books last year, indicates that the numbers of pupils who achieved age-related expectations and the higher standards in the end-of-2017 tests were above the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out about the quality of teaching and learning of reading and mathematics in key stage 2. In 2016, some pupils did not make the progress they should have and, subsequently, did not reach the higher standard of attainment at the end of Year 6. Attainment information for 2017 indicates that the number of pupils who reached age-related expectations is likely to be in line with national averages. However, this also suggests that too few pupils achieved the higher standards of attainment at the end of Year 6.
- You have already identified the need to raise attainment in both these subjects

and have quite rightly ensured that this is a key priority in your school development plan. There has been a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and assessment of both reading and mathematics. Leaders have analysed pupils' reading results to ascertain where the specific challenges are for pupils. You concluded that pupils were not able to complete comprehension questions quickly enough and that they needed to be far more aware of the type of response expected for each question.

- Pupils told you that they were not clear about the skills they needed or what skills they were using when answering particular comprehension questions. You addressed this by ensuring a strong focus on embedding reading skills across a range of subjects. For example, in a Year 5 history lesson on the Aztecs pupils were able to distinguish between whether meaning was literal or inferred while discussing an example of Aztec codex. Pupils were engaged and their responses were appropriate and sensible. Equally, in mathematics and science lessons pupils are proficient at using strategies to interpret word problems in a structured way to ascertain the meaning.
- Leaders have reviewed the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics across all year groups. In lessons, there is a clear and consistent structure that pupils follow confidently. They are able to choose from a wide range of resources to help them, which they do purposefully, and then work through the steps independently. Pupils are challenged to deepen their thinking skills. For example, once pupils have completed a mathematical task, such as solving a calculation, they then know to apply it and explain how they reached the answer.
- Teachers facilitate learning effectively, questioning pupils at regular intervals to address any misconceptions and develop pupils' learning further. Additionally, daily, small-group, focused mathematics lessons meet the needs of the most able pupils who are capable of making better-than-expected progress.
- Leaders confirm that this consistent approach needs a little more time to securely embed. However, early assessment shows that pupils are working at a deeper level in mathematics and using higher-order thinking skills in reading.
- My final line of enquiry looked at provision for disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, pupils' attainment information showed that some pupils were not achieving in line with other pupils nationally. You have rigorous assessment systems in place which track disadvantaged pupils and identify pupils who are not making the progress they should. You provided a detailed statement which shows how the pupil premium grant is allocated, and individual case studies demonstrate that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are met well in school. The most recent 2017 pupil assessment information suggests that disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with other pupils nationally in writing. In lessons, I observed examples of most-able disadvantaged pupils being supported to make better-than-expected progress in English and mathematics. Learning support assistants are trained well to support pupils who have additional needs and this was evident in all lessons observed. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make good, and in some cases better, progress from their starting points.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to embed reading and mathematics skills across the curriculum so that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards of attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff, and three members of the governing body. I also spoke with parents.

I visited all classes. This year's and last year's examples of pupils' work were scrutinised. I spoke with pupils about their work. I also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and as they moved around the classes.

A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record of employment checks, the school's self-evaluation, governors' minutes, and pupils' assessment and progress information.

I also took account of the 56 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, completed by parents, 55 free-text messages from parents, and 28 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire.