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Mrs Karen O'Keefe  
Headteacher  
Oak Cottage Primary School  
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Dear Mrs O'Keefe

### **Short inspection of Oak Cottage Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 good in January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Together with other leaders and the governing body, you have established an ambitious culture in the school where all staff share your high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Oak Cottage is a happy and welcoming school where everybody is treated with great respect and care. Pupils politely greet visitors and confidently talk about how much they enjoy school and learning.

Your ambition ensures that there is no complacency in school. From the care of the buildings to the children's behaviour and achievement, the highest standards are expected and achieved. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was considerably above national averages. In 2017, progress was in line with the national average for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

You have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection very effectively. You have analysed current assessment information and end of key stage outcomes in detail. As a result, you have systematically reviewed and revised

teaching and the curriculum. You have ensured that they align with the revised assessment arrangements nationally. This has brought about significant improvements in attainment and progress for most pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Pupils now have many opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum.

As a leadership team, you have correctly identified the most important priorities to focus on improving the quality of education further. In some cases, the plan would benefit from more specific and measurable success criteria with clear milestones for what needs to be achieved by when. This would help you and governors to monitor progress more systematically.

Governors share your vision and are equally ambitious for all pupils to achieve their potential. They know the school well, because they regularly visit to see for themselves the impact of initiatives. They regularly review their own skills to ensure that they are up to date and that they are able to support and challenge effectively.

Staff are universally positive about the school. They are proud to work at Oak Cottage and say that leaders encourage and support them effectively to improve their practice. Leaders at all levels are supported effectively to develop their skills. They regularly monitor teaching and evaluate the impact of initiatives. They work alongside senior leaders, who provide strong role models for less experienced leaders.

Parents are effusive in their praise for the quality of education, as well as the caring and nurturing approach of staff. Very many parents say that their children are happy and achieve well. One parent's comment was representative of others: 'Wonderful care, hand in hand with superb teaching. Truly educates the whole child – something that can be seen by last week's school prom.'

Pupils agree that they are happy in school. One pupil's comment summarised the feelings of many other pupils: 'Everyone is welcome, everyone is happy and everyone is respected.' The values and qualities that underpin the school's ethos, such as excellence and resilience, are firmly embedded in pupils' daily lives. Pupils readily refer to the Oak Cottage 'tree of values'. Pupils demonstrate these values very tangibly in the way that they support each other. For example, Year 6 pupils act as buddies to Reception children. Pupils play exceptionally well together at break and lunchtime. If anyone is on their own, they sit on the friendship bench and someone will come and play with them.

Pupils behave very well across the school. They enjoy a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school, including basketball, football, gardening in the polytunnel and rock band. The recent celebration prom included performances by the rock band, the ukulele band and many others.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is a culture of vigilance in school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse and neglect, such as changes in pupils' behaviour. They report their concerns without hesitation and leaders escalate issues with external agencies appropriately. Leaders seek advice and follow appropriate procedures. The school benefits from the support of a governor with significant expertise in this area.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They are taught how to stay safe, including online, through themed assemblies, such as internet safety day, and through lessons. The majority of pupils say that bullying never happens, and if it did, it would be sorted out quickly by staff. They say, 'Everyone would know about it because we all know each other and everybody is friends.'

Pupils' attendance is well above the national average. Very few pupils are persistently absent. The school provides well-targeted support for pupils and their families when they need it, to ensure that all pupils come to school ready to learn.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was well above the national average. A higher proportion of pupils than nationally had high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
- In mathematics, pupils are now given more frequent opportunities to use and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils make very good progress. Current assessment information and work in pupils' books demonstrate that more pupils now have high attainment. This is clear evidence of the impact of the training and support that has been provided to improve teaching.
- In 2017, the proportion of boys with high attainment by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics increased significantly compared with 2016. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2017 improved to be considerably above the progress made by other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language also improved in 2017 compared with 2016.
- Teachers' judgements are regularly checked with other local schools to ensure that assessment information is as accurate as possible. The deputy headteacher acts as a moderator for the local authority, which provides further confidence in the teachers' judgements. Current assessment information shows that a greater proportion of pupils have high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and in writing at key stage 2, particularly middle-ability pupils.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and carefully planned questions help pupils to develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers plan lessons

very effectively, based on pupils' prior learning. They make good use of resources to support pupils. They have appropriately high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve. All pupils take pride in their work and are very keen to do well.

- Pupils explain their reasoning in mathematics clearly. Pupils in Year 2 were learning the four times table while counting on in fours. They worked in groups of four, used their fingers to count in fours and explained how they worked out the next number in the sequence using mathematical vocabulary, which was modelled well by the teacher. The range of strategies used particularly helped girls to demonstrate their confidence and ability in mathematics.
- In English, pupils write very well, with a highly developed understanding of their audience. For some pupils, their enthusiasm leads them to work too quickly and make mistakes in the technical accuracy of their writing. While pupils are encouraged to edit and proofread their work, there is a need for further support for some pupils to ensure that their spelling, punctuation and grammar are consistently accurate.
- When reading in class, pupils discuss the author's use of language intelligently, using sophisticated vocabulary to describe characters and their feelings. Pupils generally read fluently and with excellent intonation. Many pupils read widely for pleasure, including challenging texts beyond the level expected for their age. They value the range of excellent new books that have recently been purchased for the library. In key stage 1, pupils use their phonics skills well to decode unfamiliar words.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is very well planned and effective. The majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress. The SEN coordinator (SENCo) knows the pupils' needs well and works closely with parents and external advisers to provide the most appropriate support at the right time. Parents value this and say that they can clearly see the progress their children are making in gaining independence as well as academic skills.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that progress continues to improve by ensuring that:

- all pupils are supported effectively to apply their skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately and consistently so that even more pupils achieve the highest possible standards in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation and the development plan. Together, we visited lessons in key stage 1 and key stage 2. We looked at pupils' books during lesson observations. I listened to six pupils reading and reviewed their reading records.

I observed pupils at lunchtime in the dining hall and in the playground. I spoke to pupils about what they like about school and how to stay safe. I had a tour of the school with members of your school council, the head girl and head boy.

I discussed safeguarding with you in your capacity as the designated senior leader. I also met with the SENCo and with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.

I reviewed information about attendance, behaviour, exclusions and current assessment. I read a selection of governing body minutes.

I took account of 12 responses to the staff survey, 46 responses to the pupil survey and 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.