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Mrs Sue Rees
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sue Rees

Short inspection of Oaktree Nursery and Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. A notable feature of the school is the strong care and practical support that your staff provide. You and your team are fully committed to ensure that the children, pupils and their families are supported effectively. This whole-family approach ensures that pupils' personal development and welfare are prioritised. Increasingly, this helps pupils progress in their learning well.

In 2017, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics was above that seen nationally. In writing, Oaktree pupils achieved in line with other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils did equally well. Pupils' strong progress was sustained in writing this year. However, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was not consistently good.

Pupils enter the school with low starting points. It takes time for pupils to catch up with pupils making incremental improvements year-on-year because teaching builds on what pupils know, can do and understand. The school's approaches, including reading high-quality texts and providing an interesting and motivating curriculum, are effective stimuli that pupils use to extend and deepen their knowledge and skills.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to develop the quality of teaching so that pupils make stronger progress in writing. The leaders' strategy to improve the teaching of writing is proving successful. The quality of pupils' writing has improved

markedly since 2016, when it was well below the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the high standards has also increased noticeably. The school's whole-school approach to planning writing is increasingly effective. Teaching enables pupils to produce carefully thought-out and organised writing. However, pupils in some year groups across the school do not write with the complexity and accuracy expected for their age.

You were also asked to develop leadership at all levels. You are building an effective team of middle leaders around you to bolster leadership capacity. Leaders' coordinated response to improving pupils' attainment in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 is building momentum.

Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded and extended its Nursery provision. Children benefit from inviting and engaging learning environments. Adults and children build strong relationships with one another. Children settle in quickly and enjoy the activities on offer.

Governors have invested heavily in staff to support the most vulnerable pupils. The school's enrichment support for pupils who find themselves faced with significant challenges at school and at home is effective in building pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Working with a range of professionals, pupils develop the social and emotional skills that they need to be ready to learn and achieve well. Careful planning of the curriculum ensures that pupils do not miss the same lessons or subjects when they attend. However, sometimes pupils do not catch up on the work that they miss. Leaders and governors recognise the need to tackle this.

Almost every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reported they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies, procedures and training relating to safeguarding meet requirements and are up to date. You are taking appropriate action following local authority and external advice to update your record-keeping when incidents occur.

Staff have a keen awareness of the risks that pupils face and act swiftly when they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities and parent support workers follow up these concerns to ensure that pupils, and their families, receive the support they need when they need it. They escalate concerns if they assess that pupils are not getting the support they need to keep safe. Records relating to child protection are kept meticulously. Pupils say that teachers and support workers listen and help them sort out any problems quickly.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry was to look at how well pupils attend school. In the recent past, pupil absenteeism has increased to above the national average.

Leaders draw on a wide range of strategies, provide support and take direct action, including the deployment of the education welfare officers to tackle poor attendance. As a result, persistent absenteeism is reducing. Pupils' attendance is improving steadily towards the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

- The second aspect I looked at was the impact of leaders' strategies to ensure that pupils achieve well in phonics and early reading. In the past, the proportions of children in the Reception Year reaching the early learning goal in reading, and the proportions of pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening checks in Year 1, have been below the national average.
- The current teaching of reading is increasingly successful in supporting the children and pupils to read accurately. In Reception and key stage 1, the teaching of phonics is regular and systematic and closely matched to pupils' needs. However, some low-attaining pupils in key stage 1 are not regularly encouraged to apply their letter sounds when reading or writing independently.
- Pupils who have previously struggled in applying phonics skills to their reading receive precise additional interventions to help them make progress. Previous weaknesses in reading are being remedied successfully. As a result, these pupils read with increasing accuracy and are catching up. However, some of these pupils do not yet read with the speed expected for their age.
- Very few children enter Nursery classes with the skills and knowledge typical of their age. Many children have poor speaking skills. Speech and language development are central to the school's work. Children enjoy experimenting with sounds and words. Staff give high priority to modelling speech sounds in words accurately. There is a precise focus on developing children's love of singing, rhymes and exploring books and early reading. Acorns, Nursery and Reception staff work closely together to share and confirm the accuracy of assessments of what children understand and can do. As a result, children catch up over time. However, early literacy and number skills are not developed as rapidly and this ensures that some children in Nursery and Reception are not fully prepared for their next stage.
- Most children make good progress in reading across the Reception Year. Pupils continue to catch up in Year 1 so that approximately three quarters of these pupils meet the required standard in the phonics screening checks to read words accurately. Many pupils who have previously average or low attainment make strong progress in reading by the end of Year 2. As a result, the proportions of pupils who achieve higher standards have been close to or above the national average for the last three years. The proportions of pupils at the end of key stage 1 with the attainment expected for their age was also nearing the national average this year, demonstrating good progress from pupils' low starting points. Nevertheless, leaders accept that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils have a secure understanding of what they read and that pupils apply their knowledge and skills of phonics to spell accurately.
- I also looked at the impact of leaders' strategies to improve reading at key stage 2. Pupils who have previously low attainment are catching up well. These pupils are making strong progress in their reading. Pupils experience teaching that

enables them to develop an understanding of what they read. Leaders' actions this year to widen pupils' vocabulary as an integral part of teaching are already beginning to pay off.

- My final key line of enquiry explored how well leaders at every level, including governors, are bringing about further improvement. Leaders have an acute understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Leaders and governors have refined the school's action plans and strategies for monitoring so that they focus more precisely on raising pupils' achievement. Leaders at all levels monitor the quality of teaching. However, the advice and feedback that leaders provide is not yet precise enough. As a result, teachers do not always receive the specific and practical advice about how to improve the impact of their teaching on pupils' outcomes in the short-term and across units of work.
- Governors undertake their own monitoring activities to check the impact of leaders' work against the set key priority areas. However, while the governors challenge school leaders robustly about pupils' attendance, their challenges have not ensured that all groups of pupils have caught up in key stage 1.
- The leaders of English and mathematics and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have a good handle on the strengths and aspects that require further work in their specific areas. Leaders accurately identified that pupils' progress was not as strong in mathematics across key stage 1 as it was in reading and writing. As a result, a comprehensive package of support is ensuring that children and pupils have sufficient exposure to activities that help them to apply their number skills in Reception and Year 1.
- The SENCo evaluates the impact of interventions well. Currently, the progress of pupils with SEND is most strong in reading. More precise monitoring of pupils' books is required to track pupils' progress in writing.
- Actions taken by early years leaders to improve the quality of provision are proving effective. Consequently, the differences between boys' and girls' attainment is diminishing steadily across the Nursery years. However, leaders strive to raise children's knowledge and skills further so that children make rapid progress and catch up by the end of Reception. This work continues.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enables children to make strong progress in their early literacy and number skills so that more children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception
- the teaching of phonics enables pupils to make strong progress so that those pupils who have previously low attainment catch up and read independently in Year 1
- teaching consistently enables pupils to apply their phonics in order to spell accurately
- leaders' and governors' evaluations of the impact of teaching and pupils'

academic achievement is sharpened so that pupils make sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 so that catch-up is no longer required in lower key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and two governors. I also met with a representative from Swindon local authority. I met with the parent support adviser and a designated leader for safeguarding. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I talked to pupils in lessons to gather their views. I listened to pupils read. I visited the Nursery provision for two- and three-years-olds (Acorns) and the provision for three- and four-year-olds.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, including: development plans; external reports of the school's effectiveness; school performance information; monitoring records; analysis of pupils' attendance; governing body minutes; and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 15 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through discussions during the inspection and reviewed the online staff and pupil survey.