

20 December 2018

Mrs Claire Hurst
Headteacher
Oxford Road Community School
146 Oxford Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 7PJ

Dear Mrs Hurst

Short inspection of Oxford Road Community School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with governors, you have established a shared vision that puts pupils' welfare central to everything you do. You have an unwavering commitment to sustaining improvement and setting high standards for all. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school. They know its strengths and areas for development. They prioritise actions effectively and provide staff with clear and helpful feedback. This has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes and progress in recent years.

Pupils speak very positively about their school. They enjoy coming to school and state that staff are kind and help them learn. Parents are also very supportive. They appreciate the work of leaders and staff, and feel confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents value the good communication that exists and believe their views are listened to.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Prompt and effective referrals are made to external agencies. Leaders will challenge the decisions of agencies if they consider them not to be appropriate. Governors ensure that rigorous recruitment checks take place before staff and other adults work in school. The governing body is meticulous in meeting its safeguarding duties. Training is regularly carried out and ensures that all staff understand the full range of risks to pupils. Staff know when and how to

raise concerns and, as a result, pupils are safe and well cared for.

Pupils' welfare has the highest priority. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and are confident that there are adults they can talk to if they have any concerns or worries. The curriculum has been developed to raise pupils' awareness of risks they could encounter. It helps pupils to develop strategies to avoid high-risk activities, such as joining local gangs. The curriculum also teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe online, both inside and outside of school.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we agreed a few key lines of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was to consider the impact of leaders' actions to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher standard of greater depth in writing. Although progress and attainment have improved in recent years, more pupils continue to achieve the higher standards in reading and mathematics than in writing. You have recently appointed an experienced and knowledgeable leader to lead on teaching and learning in writing. This leader has had an impact on raising standards in other curriculum areas within the school. Effective tracking systems are in place, which inform teachers of how secure pupils' understanding is. This information helps teachers decide what they need to teach pupils next. An effective phonics programme continues to ensure that even the youngest pupils quickly learn how to sound out and spell words.
- Once pupils become confident users of phonics, teachers develop their reading comprehension skills and ability to understand a range of different text styles. This is most effective when teachers carefully match the skills of the reader to the challenges of the text. In instances where the text is too difficult, fluency in reading is slowed as pupils do not understand the vocabulary, so cannot check meaning for themselves. Teachers introduce pupils to new words and interesting phrases in lessons and encourage them to use these in their own writing. When teachers make regular checks of pupils' understanding of vocabulary, there is evidence of pupils making better language choice.
- Work in books shows that pupils take pride in their work. Handwriting is neat and their presentation is of a good standard. A range of writing frames have been used across the school to support pupils' writing. These have been helpful for some pupils who require more structured guidance. The writing frames help pupils to know how to write in a particular style, for example when writing a report or a set of instructions. However, leaders' monitoring has shown them that these structures do not support the development of pupils' independent writing skills. Pupils tend to become too reliant on the prompts within the writing frame. In particular, the most able pupils are often constrained by the structure of the frame. They do not have enough opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge or use their skills independently when writing across the curriculum.
- The strongest progress in writing is evident in classes where teachers carefully model the writing process themselves. Teachers show pupils not only how to construct writing but also how to edit and improve it. As a result, pupils understand and develop the language, punctuation knowledge and awareness of

audience, applying these to their own writing.

- The next line of enquiry considered how effective leaders' actions have been in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Published information about pupils' outcomes indicates that, although this group of pupils has made good progress in recent years, their attainment is not yet in line with that of other pupils nationally. Leaders have acted on their belief that pupils learn best when their parents are involved. Adults across the school work effectively to engage parents, providing them with useful support and advice. Parental input is welcomed and encouraged. Leaders are honest and transparent with parents and, as a result, relationships and trust are strong.
- Leaders have created a culture where 'barriers are removed so learning can begin'. This is evident in both the day-to-day running of the school and the way in which leaders take a whole-child approach to learning. They are careful to ensure that pupils' social, emotional and academic progress are not viewed in isolation. Governors check that leaders' use of the pupil premium is well targeted. In class, teachers work to develop pupils' resilience and motivation. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are engaged and positive about their learning. Additional interventions are put in place to help ensure that pupils can access learning appropriately in class. Pupils report that the additional support helps them. As a result, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is improving across the school and their outcomes are moving closer to those seen nationally.
- Finally, we considered the impact of the school's work to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve their full potential. We looked at this aspect of provision because it is a focus in the school's self-evaluation. Over the last two years, a proactive and skilled leader has made significant improvements to this area. Staff are determined that pupils with SEND will have their learning needs met well. Strong transitions into early years support children and parents effectively. Likewise, transition into secondary school engages with other agencies, including youth services, to ensure that pupils' social and academic progress are maintained. The school works well with agencies and other schools to support pupils with complex needs. When pupils spend some of their day at specialist provision, staff ensure that they maintain their friendship groups and identity as a member of the class.
- Some highly specialised interventions are delivered by well-trained staff. These are closely monitored by leaders. Across the school, there is a strong focus on including all learners in classroom learning. As a result, social relationships, class identity and a sense of belonging are strong. Leaders are keen to promote pupils' independence. In the best instances, adults make timely and supportive interventions. Work in books indicates that, at times, some pupils would benefit from being given additional resources and adaptations to help them fully access learning and settle to tasks quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are more opportunities for pupils to make choices when writing, particularly

for the most able, so that they are challenged to apply their skills across the wider curriculum

- there is greater consistency in teachers' use of modelling and questioning to deepen pupils' thinking and provide appropriate challenge.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised pupils' work in English and topic books. I visited a range of lessons in the early years and key stages 1 and 2 to observe pupils learning. I talked to pupils about their learning, both in a formal pupils' meeting and informally throughout the day. I listened to pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read. I met with parents and analysed their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 15 free-text comments. I also considered responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plans; pupils' attendance information; the school's own assessment information; behaviour records; and documents related to safeguarding.