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21 December 2018

Mr James Hill
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hill

Short inspection of The Oaks Primary 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.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with the governors and senior leadership team, you have ensured that The Oaks Primary School is a vibrant, purposeful and happy place to learn.

Since the school's previous inspection, you have improved the quality of leadership and management and have developed a successful team of senior leaders who share your passion and commitment to ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to achieve well.

You and other leaders constantly reflect on the strengths of the school and accurately identify where further improvements need to be made. In 2017, you analysed pupils' writing results and identified that pupils' knowledge of spelling was not as strong as other aspects of their writing. You made improvements to the way in which spelling is taught and the quality of pupils' spelling has improved. This is evident from your own assessment information and written work in pupils' books. This has contributed to improved outcomes in writing across the school.

Governors make a positive contribution to ensuring that the school continues to improve. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths as well as the challenges you face. They provide you and other leaders with appropriate levels of support and challenge.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement recommended in your previous Ofsted inspection. You have improved the overall quality of teaching and

learning. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is of the same high standard across all year groups. You and the leadership team have supported teachers to improve their ability to check pupils' understanding of the learning and the progress they are making. The work given to pupils is now better matched to their levels of understanding. However, this could be improved further, particularly in mathematics, where some pupils do not always have the mathematical knowledge and understanding they need in order to be able to complete their work successfully. As a result of improvements you and your leadership team have made to teaching in the Early Years and Year 1, pupils in these year groups are now making more progress in all subjects than was previously the case.

You and the leadership team and governors have worked hard to create a broad, rich and exciting curriculum, which meets the needs of your learners. Generally, when children enter the school they are working at levels below those typical for their age. Skilled teaching combined with the appropriate, relevant curriculum, enables pupils to develop the skills and acquire the knowledge they need to become effective, successful learners. The majority of pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, with some making very strong progress. However, there is more to be done to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils achieves the higher standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school, and you have established a very strong safeguarding culture. You see safeguarding the welfare of pupils as a priority and have ensured that all of the school's arrangements and procedures meet statutory requirements. Records are detailed and of good quality. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate, up-to-date training and are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping children safe. They recognise that they have a collective responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Appropriate procedures are followed during the recruitment of staff.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. Parents and carers agree. The school's designated safeguarding lead and team of deputy safeguarding leads work together highly effectively to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. Support and advice from external agencies are sought where necessary and referrals are made in a timely way. Pastoral support for pupils and their families is strong.

Pupils take part in a wide range of activities aimed at providing them with the knowledge to enable them to keep safe from a range of potential dangers. These include how to use the internet safely, road safety, anti-bullying and healthy relationships.

Inspection findings

- Attendance data for the school shows that the rate of pupil absence has been above the national figure for at least the last 4 years, averaging at 5.5% compared with the national average of 4.0%. In addition, the rate of persistent absence, the percentage of pupils whose attendance is less than 90%, has been significantly higher than the

national average for at least the last three years.

- You have analysed the reasons for this and used the information to identify a wide range of effective strategies to improve attendance. These strategies include better identification of families requiring support to get children into school, employing a family support worker to work directly with these families to support them and enlisting the additional support of external agencies where necessary.
- You have monitored the impact of your actions on improving attendance and are able to demonstrate a significant reduction so far this year in the proportion of pupils whose attendance is less than 90%. While overall absence is still above the national figure, it is steadily improving.
- Although the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of their Reception year has increased over the last 3 years, it is still below the national average. In 2018, unpublished data shows that 52% of children achieved the standard compared with the national average in 2017 of 71%. We looked at the reasons for this and what actions leaders have taken in response.
- It is clear that the majority of children entering the school are developing at levels that are well below those typical for their age. Skilful teaching in the Nursery and Reception helps children to make good progress in acquiring the skills they need to become successful, independent learners. Although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of their Reception year is below the national figure, this actually represents strong progress for these children.
- The school's previous inspection found that teaching in Year 1 was not effective in matching the learning needs of pupils. In addition to this, published and provisional data for the last 3 years shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is below the national average.
- You and the leadership team monitor the progress of pupils in key stage 1 closely. You use this information to identify and implement improvements. For example, following analysis of pupils' reading assessments, you found that pupils were not as good at drawing conclusions from their reading as they needed to be in order to achieve the higher standards. Training you provided for staff and a revision of the reading curriculum ensured that the pupils were able to develop these skills. You also provided workshops for parents so they could support their children's reading at home. Progress in reading in key stage 1 has improved and more pupils are now achieving both the expected and higher standards.
- Provisional results for 2018 show that while the progress made by pupils through key stage 2 is broadly in line with national expectation in all subjects, progress in mathematics is slightly below that in reading and writing. While the majority of pupils make progress that is expected of them, not enough pupils make progress that is better than this, particularly in mathematics. Your monitoring systems showed that the progress made by pupils in years 3 and 4 was not as strong as that made in years 5 and 6. You and your leadership team made improvements to the quality of teaching and learning which included improving teachers' use of assessment in lessons so that pupils who do not grasp the learning securely enough are identified quickly and provided with additional support. Although this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress, in some lessons I visited it was clear that teachers are not always

ensuring that pupils have the mathematical knowledge they need to be able to complete the tasks they are set.

- Work in pupils' books and the school's own in-year assessment information show that progress is now improving for pupils in years 3 and 4, and that more pupils throughout key stage 2 are making better progress. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that progress through key stage 2 matches that made in the early years and in key stage 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in key stage 2, improves so that more pupils are able to achieve the higher standards by the time they leave the school. Therefore, leaders should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve so it is strong across all classes
- pupils have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding they need to achieve the learning they are capable of, particularly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Satchwell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you and the senior leaders, we visited classrooms from nursery to year 5. I examined a wide range of documentation, including the school's development plan, the school's self-evaluation document and records of safeguarding. Throughout the inspection, I held discussions with you and your senior leadership team. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. I took into consideration 19 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, six comments sent via free-text and 221 responses to the school's parent survey. I spoke to pupils and observed their behaviour throughout the school day. I reviewed the school's website.