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Dear Ms Witton

Short inspection of Oakley Church of England Combined School

Following my visit to the school on 25 June 2019, 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 school was judged to be good in December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as substantive headteacher in January 2019, you have brought much-needed stability to the school community. Working closely with governors, the local authority and the Diocese of Oxford, you have galvanised the community so that all are now signed up to your vision of pupils achieving their potential. You rightly recognise that some pupils could make better progress in their learning. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils in mathematics. Your work to tackle this, supported by dedicated teachers and support staff, is bringing about improvements.

Leaders work hard to engage with parents, carers and the wider community, reflecting the school's strong Christian ethos. Parents rate the school very highly, particularly giving prominence to the high standards of care the school has for pupils.

Pupils feel proud to be part of the school and their community. When asked about what they like about school, one pupil commented, 'It's a nice place to come and learn; it's an important part of my life.' Pupils behave well in lessons, work hard and do their best. You have created an environment where pupils feel secure, accepted and valued. As a result, pupils trust the adults that look after them and show high levels of care for one another, reflecting the school values of love, honesty and respect. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to take responsibility in school, such as school councillors or as part of the eco team. Year 6 pupils

particularly like taking care of their 'buddies' in the Reception class. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'We try to be good role models, and look after them if they are worried or upset.' Pupils like the work they do in lessons and the different levels of challenge in some of their activities. They have good attitudes to their learning and understand that if they do not behave, it not only effects their learning, but that of their friends. They enjoy the topics they study and particularly like visits that help them understand their learning better. For example, the Class 3 pupils visited the National History Museum to help deepen their learning of dinosaurs.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national figures in 2018. Progress for the last three years has been average. The most recent assessment information, externally moderated and confirmed by the work seen in pupils' books, shows that attainment in these subjects is improving.

In the previous inspection, inspectors highlighted the following strengths: the school provided a good standard of education; standards were improving; teaching was good; and governors were effective in carrying out their role. These strengths have been maintained and further developed. Leaders were asked to improve opportunities to monitor teaching more frequently. Teaching is now monitored regularly, with good-quality feedback that is appreciated by staff. As a result, teachers are held to account effectively for the progress pupils are making in their class.

Leaders were asked to focus on pupils' handwriting and presentation. Work seen in pupils' books illustrates that this has been a long-term focus and that teachers' expectations have significantly improved. On the whole, pupils present their work well, with legible writing. Leaders were asked to address parents' concerns about information provided about pupils' progress. As a result of increased opportunities for parents to talk to teachers, with two parents' evenings, a written report and a post-report drop-in, the vast majority of parents appreciate the improvements the school has made in this area.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since your appointment, you have developed a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. You have made safeguarding a priority, and with the support of the whole-school community, you share the same message: 'safeguarding is everybody's responsibility'. Pupils feel very safe because they trust the adults in the school to take care and look after them. 'Everybody can find someone to listen to them,' was a comment made by a younger pupil. All policies and procedures have been reviewed to the highest standard, including the importance of the chronology of any incidents and recording of actions taken.

Records are meticulous, with actions identified and always actioned. Both are regularly monitored to ensure that procedures are as tight as they can be. Vetting procedures for the employment of new staff are robust, ensuring that pupils are well protected from any possible harm. The designated safeguarding lead works effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families

get the right support to help them succeed and achieve.

Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school offers pupils a high level of care, in a safe and secure environment, free from any form of discrimination. New staff and governors receive comprehensive induction training, which is supplemented by ongoing training for all staff. As a result, staff are both confident and competent to act appropriately if any child protection concern should arise.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching mathematics. This is because published information showed that outcomes in mathematics were not as strong as those achieved in reading and writing.
- Most pupils are making good progress in mathematics, as illustrated by work seen in pupils' books across the school. Number is taught effectively throughout the school. Pupils can add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers of increasing complexity as they go through the school. There is sufficient emphasis on topics such as fractions, shape and data handling, building steadily on skills from year to year. For example, in one lesson visited, pupils were using a ruler and protractor, together with their previous knowledge, to draw accurately squares and equilateral triangles with sides of a given length.
- Opportunities for all pupils to use their mathematical skills of reasoning and problem-solving are improving, particularly in number. The most able pupils are provided with some opportunities to develop a deeper understanding through reasoning in number work. However, in other areas these opportunities are much less frequent. As a result, the progress these pupils make is not as good as it should be. Leaders recognise that mathematics teaching is an important area to develop for all pupils but particularly for most-able pupils if they are going to reach their potential.
- My second line of enquiry was to look at the provision the school was making for the most able pupils in reading and writing. This is because published information, showing the proportions of pupils gaining higher attainment in these subjects, was uneven across the key stages.
- Work in books from across the school illustrates that the provision for most-able pupils is improving.
- In reading, there are increased opportunities for most-able pupils to probe more complex texts, displaying more challenging vocabulary. As a result, their comprehension skills of deduction and inference are improving. Pupils are able to answer more complex questions on opinion and emotion rather than just compiling facts. In writing, the most able pupils are given more opportunities to develop the complexities of their sentences using a greater range of punctuation. As a result, more of these pupils are writing longer pieces of work, making better progress and achieving higher standards.
- My final line of enquiry was to consider how well phonics is taught in the school. This is because results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been inconsistent year-on-year.

- You provided convincing evidence through your ongoing assessment information to illustrate that the fluctuations in results in the Year 1 phonics check over time were due to the different make-up of the cohorts involved.
- Phonics lessons are well organised and mostly well taught in the school. Planning is well structured and activities are appropriately targeted for pupils of different abilities. Teachers and support staff have received training that has supported phonics development in the school. There are a number of effective interventions in place for pupils who sometimes find learning phonics more difficult. Teachers have good subject knowledge, but leaders acknowledge that the quality of some follow-up activities could be improved so that pupils could make even better progress in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are improved opportunities for all pupils, particularly the most able, to use reasoning and problem-solving skills in their mathematics, so that all pupils can deepen their learning
- tasks and activities in phonics allow pupils to build on their knowledge and make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

William James
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and several members of staff. We reviewed your management structure and the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection. With you, I visited all classes to observe learning, and examined pupils' work. I held a meeting with representatives of the governing body, including the chair. I undertook telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority who knows the school well. Prior to the inspection, I examined the school's website and a variety of documents relating to the school, including published performance information. I considered a range of documentation, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance. I took into account 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and their views about the school.