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Mr Ian Williams
Headteacher
Lakefield CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of Lakefield CofE Primary 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since its previous inspection six years ago. Since converting to an academy, Lakefield CofE Primary School has joined the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust, (DGAT). You and the governors are positive about the benefits linked to joining the trust. Governors recognise that the local information for benchmarking against other similar schools is useful for holding the school to account. You appreciate the joint working, sporting competitions and curriculum planning that is developing between primary schools in the trust.

Parents, pupils and governors talk about Lakefield in glowing terms. The additional Nursery, before- and after-school and holiday clubs which you provide offer continuity of care for the children of working parents. The numerous activities run by school staff, which include music, sports and even mountain biking, add to the strong community ethos of the school. An active parent-teacher association supports the school well, both financially and in giving of their time, which you appreciate greatly. The beautiful spiritual garden and the new pond being created now are rich examples of their joint work with school staff. You ensure that your pupils are well-prepared for moving from a small school to their secondary education by providing them with experiences that extend beyond the school and their own community. For example, during the inspection the Year 6 pupils were enjoying a residential visit to Bude, in Cornwall. There they were being taught water sports and other outdoor pursuits as well as becoming more independent by staying away from home.

You and your senior leadership team have maintained your focus on improving the quality of education since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics. Overall, they perform well against all the national benchmarks. Approximately a third of your pupils leave Lakefield every year for the local grammar schools. However, there is a wide variation in the standards reached in all classes. There are a small proportion of pupils who could achieve more in reading, which affects their access to, and confidence in, all other academic subjects.

Pupils told me how much they enjoy science, singing and physical education, which are strengths of the school. They also like going to the forest school. Pupils that I spoke to at lunchtime were polite and entertaining, telling me what they liked about school. In assembly, the pupils sang nicely and responded sensibly to the bible story that was being acted out by members of the local church community.

The achievement of external awards, ranging from the Music Mark and the Eco Mark to the 360-degree safe Online Safety Mark by SWGfL and many more, is praiseworthy. These external verifications show the emphasis you give to pupils having a rich educational experience and to their well-being. Staff are proud of these achievements and are keen to continue to gain them. However, the additional work that applying for awards requires potentially detracts staff from some of the more fundamental issues relating to the systematic teaching of reading and key stage 1 mathematics that we discussed. This is particularly relevant for pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure. You ensure that all staff are suitably qualified and practice safe recruitment. The statutory staffing requirements for the Nursery and out-of-school provision, which is managed by the governing body, are met. All arrangements for child protection are in place. You and your staff know pupils and their families well and work closely with them when they need support.

Inspection findings

- You recognise that the teaching of phonics is not strong enough in the lower part of the school for the very small proportion of pupils who are finding learning to read difficult. Pupils who are struggling in Reception and key stage 1 are not being taught systematically.
- Too many reading and phonic schemes and systems for recording information about pupils' reading are in use in the lower part of the school. Staff do not check regularly enough which sounds and blends pupils know when providing them with new reading books. For example, a few pupils were unable to read every third word in their reading book. Staff asked them to guess unknown words from the pictures, which led to many mistakes, such as reading 'belt' for 'pillow'. The challenge was far too great for weaker readers and, consequently, these pupils do not have enough practise in decoding at the right level to encourage reading fluency. You are keen to rectify this immediately and ensure that a consistent

approach is taken to teaching reading, particularly for readers who are struggling, in the lower part of the school.

- Strong subject leadership in science is giving pupils a good basic knowledge. Pupils clearly enjoy their science work and staff explain new information well. They capture pupils' interest through a good balance of experiments that the pupils do themselves as well as practical demonstrations. This helps pupils to get the information they need quickly enough to make sense of new concepts. They also connect new information to what pupils are already familiar with, such as making a link between local floods to work on rising water levels and temperature changes.
- The mathematics subject leader has made good use of the local mathematics hub. Since working with the hub, she has conducted a full revision of how mathematics is taught across the school, which has led to better outcomes for pupils in Year 6. However, the opportunities for the subject leader to check whether new agreed whole-school mathematics policies, such as introducing additional arithmetic practice, are limited. This means that despite identifying the issues accurately, not all classes provide pupils with enough practice to learn their times tables and number bonds well.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) monitors the pupils on the special educational needs register well. She ensures that interventions support pupils emotionally and academically. However, the additional records for pupils identified with SEND do not always correspond well with the assessment record-keeping that is already in place for all pupils. This means that some pupils identified with SEND do not always make enough progress, particularly in reading.
- The local governing body is supportive of the school and your leadership. Those I met are parents of pupils in the school and so also have a good insight into the day-to-day experience of pupils. They are clear that pupils enjoy Lakefield and this shows in their excellent attendance. The committee structures and the information you provide, including your evaluation of what is going well and what needs to improve, help them to prioritise effectively and hold you to account. This has helped to maintain the school's improvement since the last inspection.
- You are keen to ensure that pupils experience a broad and rich curriculum. One of the ways you do this is to pursue the various quality marks that provide a structure for improvement. These are an effective way of providing assurance to governors that certain standards have been met. However, in focusing on so many of these awards, attention towards some of the more basic aspects of teaching has taken more of a back seat. For example, not all current staff have been trained to teach phonics. You recognise this and are putting plans in place to rectify it.
- Pupils are happy attending this school. They feel safe and enjoy the carefully considered physical and emotional challenges you provide. The culture you have created and the trust between governors, staff, parents and pupils is testimony to your work. The trust values your leadership and insight into what pupils need to make the best of their secondary school experience. Parents who responded to

the online questionnaire are unanimous in recommending this school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff, including leaders, are trained in the teaching of early reading to ensure a consistent approach to teaching reading across the school
- reading books that are sent home are reviewed carefully, so that beginner and struggling readers are provided with books that precisely match their phonic knowledge
- staff give struggling pupils enough practise at decoding words which contain the sounds they have already been taught so that these pupils become fluent and confident readers
- all staff put into practice arrangements that are agreed, particularly in the timetabling and teaching of number work (arithmetic) and reading.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of DGAT, the director of education for the Diocese of Gloucester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, members of the local governing body, staff, parents and pupils. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils at work and to look at their books. I listened to some pupils read from their reading books and looked at their reading records. I talked to pupils in lessons and at lunchtime to find out their views of the school.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included school improvement planning and information about the curriculum on the school website. I also looked at safeguarding documentation. In addition, I took account of 70 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service.