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Mrs Kirsten Lemming
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lemming

Short inspection of Filton Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 July 2013.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Following a period of staffing turbulence and a fall in pupils' standards, the school joined the Olympus Academy Trust in September 2016. Since joining the trust, you and your leaders have set the school on an ambitious path of improvement. You have worked very successfully with the executive headteacher of the trust. School leadership has been strengthened considerably, and you have recruited and nurtured a team of committed and effective teachers.

Filton Hill has benefited greatly from the support and expertise that the trust has brought. Pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6 have improved significantly, especially in writing and mathematics. In 2018, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was significantly above average and put the school in the top 10% of schools in the country. Early indications from the national tests in 2019 show that these standards have been exceeded. Nearly all pupils currently in Year 2 are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics and nearly 20% are working at greater depth. The high proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school now reach standards similar to, or higher than, those of their peers.

Many children join the Reception class with skills and abilities that are lower than those

typically seen. By the time they leave Reception, an above-average proportion of children (75%) have reached a good level of development. Over 90% of the pupils in Year 1 now reach the expected standard in the national phonics screening check.

Despite the strong gains of recent years, you show no signs of complacency. You and your governors have a very good understanding of what the school does well, and what it needs to do to improve further. For instance, you are acutely aware that, although pupils' attainment and progress in writing and mathematics have greatly improved, progress in reading has lagged behind. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 or reaching the higher standard in the subjects in key stage 2 has been lower than that seen nationally.

Governors are far sighted and highly ambitious for the school. There is a positive professional relationship between the governors and staff and school leaders, in which governors provide the right balance of support and challenge. They understand the importance of holding leaders to account. They are very well informed about how well the school is doing and have a secure understanding of different types of school information. The trust has provided a very strong strategic direction for the school. Staff benefit greatly from sharing good practice and innovation with other colleagues across the trust.

Filton Hill is a welcoming, caring school. Staff make every effort to ensure that any obstacles to learning that are placed in the way of its pupils are overcome. There is a very positive atmosphere in classrooms and teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and eagerness and most are happy learners, relishing all that the school has to offer them.

You reach out to your local community in a positive way. Parents and carers speak highly of the school. One parent echoed the views of many in saying:

'All staff are positive, professional and friendly. The school has produced a well behaved, polite and inquisitive student body who are ready to question and actively learn. They are a credit to their teachers and management team.'

Safeguarding is effective

You and your staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe and protected. All pupils, but especially those who may be thought of as vulnerable or at risk, are kept safe and out of harm as a result of strong pastoral and multi-agency work. You work very well with your designated safeguarding governor to ensure that key personnel provide concerted support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders make prompt referrals of any concerns, reliably using the school's well-established reporting systems and their comprehensive knowledge of their local community.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Training is up to date, records are meticulously maintained and the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff are thorough.

You have made sure that pupils have access to a wealth of curriculum, pastoral and online guidance that ensures that they know how to keep themselves safe. You review the needs of your vulnerable pupils daily. Staff use the full range of information available to them to focus on pupils with the most need, including those at risk of low attendance.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus.

- The first line of enquiry considered whether pupils' gains in reading in key stage 2 are now matching the strong progress seen in their writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2018 was significantly above average, while progress in reading was average.
- You rightly identified that the key reasons for the slower progress in reading include, for many pupils, underdeveloped language skills and a weak vocabulary. Working with colleagues across the trust, you have introduced a range of strategies to raise teachers' expectations and improve challenge in reading.
- Staff are acutely aware that the key to improving reading skills in key stage 2 is to make sure that successful early reading is firmly embedded at Reception and key stage 1. Leaders give a very high priority to early reading and the trust-wide phonics scheme is consistently and expertly delivered right from the start of the Reception year. Pupils learn to decode sounds and letters from an early age and, by the time they reach Year 2, many are fluent readers. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check this year has risen to over 90%.
- Once fluency has been mastered in key stage 1, many pupils become avid readers in key stage 2. One pupil told the inspector that she 'cannot stop reading'. Pupils' appetite for reading across key stage 2 is fed by teachers' enthusiasm for literature and by teachers regularly reading a range of texts, including poetry, to pupils. A large and diverse range of fiction and non-fiction books is available to pupils in all classes.
- You are developing the curriculum so that it increasingly supports pupils' wider vocabulary and reading skills through lively topic work in history, geography and science. Reading sessions in key stage 2 are exciting and inspiring, and pupils are increasingly able to make sharp and insightful interpretations of plot and characterisation.
- The second line of enquiry looked at the extent to which the most able pupils in key stages 1 and 2 were being challenged to work at greater depth and the higher standard, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Our learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work showed a consistent level of challenge for all groups of pupils but especially the most able. Pupils' work and your assessment records show that the most able pupils are making strong gains in writing in key stages 1 and 2. They show enthusiasm and stamina in their writing, producing lengthy

and well-thought-through pieces of work on a wide range of topics. Pupils are also being challenged to make strong gains in spelling. More are able to spell difficult words with confidence. This, in turn, allows them to write expressively and often with sophistication. Pupils' workbooks show impressive improvements in their handwriting over time. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are highly proficient at writing for a variety of audiences and styles and often use complex grammatical constructions more usually encountered at secondary school.

- Staff have responded with enthusiasm and determination to make sure that the most able pupils make strong gains in mathematics. Across key stages 1 and 2, mathematical work is increasingly demanding, especially for the most able. Staff give pupils imaginative opportunities to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts and find new ways of applying ideas. Work in books shows that a high number of pupils are developing fluency in their mathematics and many have well developed reasoning skills. The most able pupils are well able to use their secure knowledge of number facts to solve complex number problems confidently and, in unfamiliar situations, apply concepts they have already mastered.
- The final line of enquiry looked at how well children in the early years, especially disadvantaged children, are making stronger gains and are becoming better prepared for key stage 1.
- Very few children join the Reception class with the skills and knowledge typical of their age. Many children have poor speaking skills, and so speech and language development are central to the school's work. Children enjoy experimenting with sounds and words, and staff give a high priority to accurate modelling of speech sounds in words. There is a precise focus on developing children's love of singing and rhymes, and on exploring books and early reading.
- Reception staff work closely together to share and confirm the accuracy of assessments of what children understand and can do. Gains in early literacy and number skills are being steadily maximised, which is ensuring that a greater proportion of children, including disadvantaged children, in Reception are ready for their next stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements to the teaching of reading in key stages 1 and 2 are consolidated and continued, so that pupils' reading skills continue to flourish and they become even more avid and enthusiastic readers
- leaders at all levels embed and closely monitor the strategies to stretch and challenge the most able pupils, so that the proportion of pupils working at greater depth and at the higher standard continues to rise.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (Olympus Academy Trust), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and the chief executive officer of Olympus Academy Trust. We visited classrooms together to assess pupils' attainment and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. We looked at pupils' workbooks and talked with pupils in lessons. I held a discussion with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 and also listened to pupils from Years 1, 2, 3 and 6 read.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I also looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record.

I gathered views from parents and took account of the 42 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View. I received 16 free-text responses and spoke with parents at the end of the school day.