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27 April 2018

Mrs Elizabeth Christopher
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Christopher

Short inspection of Oakhurst Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Over a sustained period, the school suffered considerable changes in staffing, school leadership and governance. Across this academic year, interim leaders' actions have stabilised and improved the school markedly. You and senior leaders have a strong understanding of the school's many strengths and the aspects that require further work. You have been successful in strengthening the work of middle leaders and in improving the quality of education pupils receive. Leaders have secured rapid whole-school improvement to remedy the previously identified weaknesses in teaching. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes are now typically strong. The school has recovered well after a dip in its performance.

At the last inspection you were asked to raise the standards of pupils' writing. In recent years, pupils' progress and achievement have been lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. In 2017, pupils' progress and achievement in writing improved noticeably at the end of key stage 2. The teaching of writing in Year 6 is strong. The proportions of pupils meeting and exceeding the expected standards have increased to be above the national average. However, you acknowledge that while the teaching of writing is good overall, some relative weaknesses in teaching writing remain further down the school. This prevents some current pupils who

have previously average attainment from making rapid progress and exceeding the standards that are expected for their age.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that teachers' questioning probed pupils' thinking. This is now particularly successful in developing pupils' understanding of what they are reading in key stage 2. Leaders' whole-school strategy to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving is also increasingly successful. As a result, pupils use and apply their mathematical skills well to reason and solve problems. Another aspect raised at the last inspection was to make sure that teachers set work at the right level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. This work is only partially effective.

You took up your role as headteacher just a few days before the inspection. You have worked closely with the previous interim leadership team to enable a smooth transition. You are already well informed of the school's evaluation of its performance and current improvement initiatives.

Pupils attend well and enjoy coming to school. Systems in place to check pupils' attendance are detailed and are enabling many of those pupils who have been persistently absent in the past to attend more regularly.

Almost every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that their child makes good progress. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to another parent. Those parents spoken to on inspection confirm they are positive about the changes that have been made this year. However, a small minority of parents remain concerned about leadership and how well the school responds to concerns when they arise. You, and the governing body, acknowledge that there is more to do to secure even greater parental satisfaction. You recognise this as an ongoing priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding training is regular and detailed so that staff are consistently kept up to date and know what to do if they are concerned about pupils' well-being. For example, reviews of training case studies and scenarios mean that staff are well informed and kept up to date with best practice and current legislation. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding work in close partnership with external agencies to ensure that everything is being done to minimise pupils' risk of harm.

Leaders consult with an external safeguarding consultant to ensure that all school practices are up to date and fit for purpose. Leaders are timely in their response to the actions of annual safeguarding audits. However, minor aspects of the school's safeguarding record-keeping require strengthening. Statutory safeguarding duties and welfare requirements are met.

Pupils feel safe and say that they know whom to go to if they have concerns.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on whether pupils in key stage 1 who have previously low attainment are make consistently good progress in English. This is because in recent years a lower-than-average proportion of this group of pupils met expected standards in reading and writing. The teaching of phonics is regular and systematic. Leaders' checks on pupils' progress in their phonic development are precise. Teachers use their assessments to plan what they teach. Increasingly, pupils' gaps in their phonic knowledge are diminishing quickly.
- Pupils are making steady improvements in their writing. However, pupils' writing books indicate that there is some variation in teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of across classes. A few low- and middle-attaining pupils and boys are not catching or keeping up sufficiently well in their writing. These pupils do not write with the depth and sophistication expected for their age. There are some minor variations in teaching across classes. As a result, some low- and middle-attaining pupils in key stage 1 make swift progress over time, while others do not make the rapid progress that they could.
- Another aspect I looked at was the impact of leadership systems, including governance, on ensuring that current pupils' progress is consistently good. This is because there have been significant changes to leadership and some variance in the progress that pupils have made in the school in the recent past. Leaders' actions at all levels, including governance, are making a discernible difference. Senior leaders have worked determinedly this year to turn the school's weaknesses around. As a result, pupils' progress and achievement are now strong. Middle leadership is effective. Middle leaders have been trained up well and now take a full role in checking the school's performance through book scrutiny and lesson observations. Leaders provide teachers with detailed feedback about the strengths in their practice and aspects that require further work. Leaders are not complacent. They recognise the need to tighten their monitoring checks to ensure closer scrutiny of pupils' progress.
- The governing body has benefited from further training. The way the governing body checks the impact of school improvement initiatives has improved considerably since a local authority review last year. Governors undertake visits to school to find out information for themselves. These include, for example, safeguarding visits and meetings with the pupil premium leader. Minutes of meetings show that they do not shy away from asking challenging questions about pupils' performance. However, governors do not yet receive all the information they require to have oversight of the progress pupils make from their prior attainment points. This means that it makes it difficult for them to hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour. Plans are already underway to remedy this.
- I also examined the teaching of reading. This is because a smaller-than-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standards in reading in 2017. Leaders' strategy to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of what they read is paying off. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is tracked robustly. Leaders and governors have tightened the way the additional funding is used and

prioritised to accelerate pupils' academic performance. The teaching of reading requires pupils to make connections and draw inferences from what they read in a range of curriculum contexts in key stage 2. As a result, the vast majority of pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points. In key stage 1, a breadth of reading skills are taught well. However, sometimes pupils tackle work that is too easy or they have to sit and wait before more challenging concepts are tackled. This hinders the most able pupils' progress in reading. Consequently, on occasions teaching does not add to the most able pupils' knowledge or deepen their understanding.

- I also examined how well teachers use their assessments to ensure that learning builds on what pupils know, can do and understand. Leaders have improved the way they check pupils' understanding this year. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' learning. However, on occasions teachers do not use their assessments precisely enough to plan work that stretches and challenges middle-attaining and the most able pupils. This is a priority for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors hold leaders stringently to account for ensuring that their checks on teaching and learning are thorough and ensure close scrutiny of pupils' progress
- previously low-attaining pupils, including boys, catch up quickly so that a greater proportion of these pupils in key stage 1 write with the accuracy, depth and complexity expected for their age
- teachers plan work that is consistently challenging for the middle-attaining and most able pupils, so that a greater proportion of pupils exceed the standards that are expected for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, other school leaders, and three governors. I met with a representative from Swindon local authority. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I met with a small group of pupils to talk about their views of the school and heard them read.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation reports, development plans and school performance information. I also

looked at monitoring records for teaching, learning and assessment, your analysis of pupils' attendance, and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 68 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I talked to a number of parents at the end of the school day. I gathered the views of staff through discussions during the inspection and the online survey.