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Ms Iona Wrigley
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Dear Ms Wrigley

Short inspection of Oakdale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 October 2016, 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team, supported well by improved governance, have restored the good quality of education in this improving school since the previous inspection. This comes after a period in which your own evidence and that of the local authority demonstrated that aspects of the school's provision had declined and needed to improve. When you took up your position three years ago, you identified that teaching, learning and assessment were not of the standard that you expected. You set out your stall clearly and placed improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the heart of the school's improvement work. You put in place an appropriate programme of training and support for teachers. As a result, almost all teachers plan learning which enables pupils to make good progress across a range of subjects. You have achieved this, while maintaining the high quality of care for pupils that was noted at the school's previous inspection. One parent commented that the school provides a 'welcome and sense of warmth' to parents and pupils alike. This sentiment was echoed on several further occasions during the inspection.

When you arrived at the school, you carefully reviewed each aspect of the school's work. You recognised that standards in the early years and at key stage 1 were not high enough. You took effective action that has led to children now making a good start to their education at Oakdale Primary School. The early years setting provides a caring, organised environment in which children are quickly able to acquire and improve their phonic and communication skills. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 was considerably higher than the national

average. This good start is now more successfully built on in key stage 1, where under the leadership of your quietly effective numeracy leader, standards in mathematics have risen and are above the national average. Teachers have received appropriate training and support and are more confident in planning learning that enables pupils to gain, and apply, a deeper understanding of number. As a result, standards achieved in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 were above the national average. Evidence seen in many current pupils' books demonstrates that they are making good progress. Greater proportions of most-able pupils are achieving the higher standards of which they are capable in mathematics at the end of key stage 1.

In 2016, the overall key stage 2 outcomes were below national averages, most noticeably in achievement in writing. However, these pupils, several of whom joined the school after the start of Year 5, made accelerated progress across upper key stage 2 and differences in achievement with their peers nationally reduced considerably. You attribute these improvements to the better quality of teaching, learning and assessment as well as to the individual support that you put in place. However, you know that not all teaching in key stage 2 is of the high standard that you expect. For example, the frequency with which a small number of teachers correct the spellings of key words varies. This can lead to pupils in these classes repeating errors. Similarly, some teachers do not provide appropriate opportunities for the most able pupils to achieve the highest standards.

You correctly judged that the quality of pupils' literacy needed to improve, as did their confidence in applying their language skills on paper. You have developed a curriculum that is rich with opportunities for pupils to develop their writing and mastery of the English language. This was confirmed by parents, one of whom told me that the curriculum had 'captured the imagination of the children'. The enthusiasm with which many pupils speak and set about their work confirms this to be the case. Pupils also benefit from a carefully coordinated approach to reading across the school. Your leaders choose texts that complement the imaginative topic work that pupils are studying. For example, to support the work done on your chosen topic of chocolate, pupils read 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. Inspection evidence demonstrates that many pupils are increasingly confident in their written use of more expressive and expansive language as a result. As one pupil commented, 'the school helps me with my language and I understand what authors mean'. The confidence with which younger pupils read and apply their phonic skills supports this view and demonstrates that current pupils are increasingly enthusiastic readers at Oakdale Primary School.

A small number of boys still require considerable levels of encouragement to accurately apply their developing literacy skills and write at length and so make accelerated progress. You have already put in place several strategies that have proved successful elsewhere in the school to help these pupils. However, you are aware that even more work needs to be done to ensure that these boys progress well.

You have correctly made the achievement of the most able, including that of the disadvantaged most able pupils, a priority area for the school. While the progress that the most able pupils make has improved over the past two years, you acknowledge that this rate of progress needs to increase. In many classes, the most able pupils are now making better progress than was previously the case. This is due to your good work to raise teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Where this is done well, such as in key stage 1 and upper key stage 2, the most able pupils respond very well. For example, in key stage 1, the pupils demonstrated their well-developed literacy skills in their creatively written accounts of their recent school visits. However, not all teachers plan learning that enables the most able pupils to quickly get into their stride and attempt the more challenging work. In this small number of classes, the most able pupils lose momentum in their learning and make slower progress.

Very many pupils attend well. They are happy at school and many told me how much they enjoy their learning. You and your pastoral leaders track pupils' attendance with care and, where the attendance of a pupil starts to decline, take action to ensure that this improves. While you can demonstrate that this action has been successful in raising the attendance of individual pupils, the attendance of a small number remains too low.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils told me that Oakdale Primary School is a safe and happy place to learn. High proportions of parents spoken with on the morning of the inspection and of those who expressed their views on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are happy and safe. Inspection evidence supports their views.

Pupils enthusiastically explained the strategies that they had learned to keep safe when online and why it was important to be alert when using the internet. Pupils were also keen to tell me about the safety strategies that they have learned from activities such as the school's '999 club' visit to the local fire service station and the talk from representatives of a local canine charity. Through these activities, leaders are providing an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to develop a wider understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of settings.

Pupils are able to explain what bullying is and are clear that this is a rare occurrence at their school. They are also confident that any bullying would be dealt with well by school leaders. School records support pupils' views and demonstrate that leaders take appropriate action if any incidents take place.

Leaders keep detailed records that demonstrate that staff receive appropriate and timely training in matters such as child protection and the government's 'Prevent' duty. Adults know what action to take if they have a concern about the welfare of a child and demonstrate a clear awareness of their responsibility to be alert to such an eventuality. School records relating to the checks carried out on staff employed at the school are carefully maintained.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher and her senior team lead the school well. Together with the strong governing body, they have set clear priorities to continue to improve the school. These leaders carefully track the progress made towards each priority and this is leading to improvements in pupils' progress. Leaders acknowledge that the pace of this good work needs to be maintained to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve that of which they are capable. While overall, pupils' achievement has improved over the past three years, in 2016, outcomes at key stage 2 were not as high as they should have been.
- Three years ago, an external survey indicated that governance was not as effective as it needed to be. Led by the determined and knowledgeable chair of the governing body, governors acted upon this report and now set a clear strategic direction for the school. Governors also provide good support and challenge to the headteacher and her senior team. Governors are appropriately trained and confident in holding leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school.
- Leaders have improved the way that mathematics is taught. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop their understanding of numbers before they attempt to solve a range of mathematical problems. This has led to an improvement in the outcomes that many pupils achieve. For example, standards achieved at key stage 1 were above the national average. At key stage 2, the proportion achieving the expected standard was in line with the national average, and current pupils make good progress in mathematics in almost all classes.
- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of feedback that teachers provide on pupils' work. Evidence in books indicates that teachers now offer clarity of feedback and pupils respond well to the advice given. However, a scrutiny of books demonstrated that, in some cases, important spelling errors are left unchecked. This limits the pace at which pupils improve their writing and spelling.
- Leaders were also asked to improve the precision with which subject coordinators monitor pupils' achievement across their subject areas. This has been achieved. Under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, leaders track with great care and have a good understanding of the progress that pupils, including different groups of pupils, make across the curriculum. Where this accurate information demonstrates that achievement is not good enough, school leaders are taking appropriate action. For example, the leader who has successfully improved the early years is now also devoting similar energy in her role as the coordinator of music across the school.
- Many disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress the longer that they are at Oakdale Primary School. These pupils made progress by the end of key stage 2 that was in line with that of other pupils nationally in 2015. School evidence demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils continue to make similar progress. School leaders are aware of the need to update the information on the school website to reflect the latest statutory guidance on reporting on the strategies used to achieve these outcomes and their impact.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. This is because they are given effective support by teachers and skilled teaching assistants both in their classrooms as well as in groups. The leadership of this area of the school's work is particularly strong.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effective strategies already in place to develop pupils', and in particular boys', literacy skills are implemented by adults in all classes across each subject
- each teacher provides effective opportunities for the most able pupils to achieve the high standards of which they are capable
- leaders continue to develop strategies to improve the attendance of the very small number of pupils who do not attend often enough
- the school website is compliant with respect to the pupil premium strategy.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I explored the effectiveness with which leaders are improving standards in mathematics and writing, how well the most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able pupils, are achieving, how well leaders ensure that all groups of pupils attend well, and the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.

I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body. I visited each class with you or your deputy headteacher to observe pupils in lessons. Together we scrutinised their work in books to determine the progress pupils make over time. I also listened to pupils read. I evaluated a range of school documents, including information on pupils' attendance and progress, school improvement planning and your evaluation of the school's performance. I checked the school's records for the recruitment of staff and of keeping pupils safe. I also considered the views of parents who spoke with me at the start of the school day as well as those expressed through Parent View. I evaluated the school's website and found that it did not meet the Department for Education's requirements for the information that schools must publish in respect of the information relating to reporting the school's pupil premium strategy.