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Dear Mrs West

Short inspection of Oaklands Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 5 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide clear vision and leadership and are well-respected by staff and pupils. You and your team are rightly ambitious for all of the pupils in your care and have a clear focus on improving the quality of provision at Oaklands. Pupils and the large majority of parents are rightly proud of the school and all that it achieves.

Oaklands Junior School has a particularly warm and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are happy, confident and display very constructive attitudes towards their work, the school and each other. They are proud to explain their learning and readily share ideas. This pride is also evident in their well-presented written work. Pupils told me that they appreciate the range of opportunities that the school offers, in particular the range of sporting activities and team building events such as the residential trip to Osmington Bay.

Supporting pupils' personal development is clearly a strength of the school. Pupils can explain the importance of fundraising activities for charity and many take particular pleasure in supporting younger pupils either socially or with their reading skills. Leaders ensure that pupils are encouraged to have high aspirations. This inspection took place during the school's 'aspirations week' during which visitors were inspiring pupils to consider a range of different careers. In addition, assembly was used to challenge pupils to design creative engineering solutions to everyday problems with a view to entering a national competition.

Pupil's achievement is good. However, historical progress information indicates that, although pupils achieved well in reading and mathematics, standards of writing and the overall levels of progress made by the most able pupils were areas of weakness in the past. This is no longer the case. Your school improvement planning is detailed and appropriately focused. Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school and use this to identify strengths and areas for development. This has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and assessment in English over the past year. Consequently, standards are now rising and all groups of pupils currently in the school are making stronger progress in English and mathematics.

Leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Working in partnership with the local authority and other local schools you have implemented new assessment systems and teaching approaches. This has enabled much smarter monitoring of the progress that all groups of pupils make and allowed teachers to adapt their planning where necessary. As a result, the quality of teaching and outcomes have improved and staff morale is high.

Safeguarding is effective.

This is a school that knows its pupils well and ensures that they are cared for and protected rigorously and compassionately. Pupils report that they feel safe and happy. Incidents of bullying or bad behaviour are very rare and appropriate actions are taken when they do occur. Pupils work hard and participate diligently. They are looked after and supported remarkably well. This is reflected in pupils' very high standards of behaviour in lessons and very good conduct around the school.

Staff work particularly well together to protect the welfare of the pupils. Policies and practices meet statutory requirements and appropriate checks are made on all adults working with pupils. Staff receive regular and relevant training on safeguarding with appropriate focus on maintaining awareness of radicalisation and e-safety. There are very well established relationships and good communication with other agencies. Consequently, staff respond appropriately and swiftly to any concerns, ensuring timely and effective support for pupils of concern and reviews of the impact of any actions taken.

Inspection findings

- You have embedded a culture of high expectations for all, underpinned by a clear vision of, 'Learning to think and thinking to learn'. Achievements are celebrated prominently from the front door throughout the corridors and classrooms and via the 'I am talented, together we are awesome' display in the main hall. As a result, pupils are self-confident, articulate and proud of their school.
- You have worked closely with the local authority and governors to establish an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders have used this knowledge to make essential improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. For example, you

recognised the need to strengthen teachers' use of assessment and to improve the teaching and learning of writing. Drawing on helpful support from the local authority, you implemented a new and improved system to assess pupils' progress and attainment in line with the new national curriculum. Teachers make use of this assessment information to help them plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. This system has supported teachers to make changes which have led to better-quality outcomes across the school.

- Close working relationships between staff ensure that they learn together. You have created an atmosphere for teachers and teaching assistants that supports their professional development. Staff are proactive and keen to refine their practice. Consequently, new staff feel very well supported and highly skilled teaching assistants inspire pupils with confidence in their reading and writing.
- Leaders have taken effective steps to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The quality of teaching seen during this inspection, the schools' accurate current progress information together with the work in pupils' books all confirm that the majority of teaching at Oaklands Junior School is securely good or better. There is clear evidence of improved levels of challenge for all groups of pupils, including the most able, and leaders are keen to improve standards still further. Reading and mathematics skills across the school are particularly strong and writing is now broadly in line with national expectations and improving.
- In the past, although a high proportion of pupils have entered the school with above-average achievement, standards by the end of Year 6 have only been broadly in line with national expectations. In 2016, as yet unvalidated school figures show that the proportion reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above provisional national averages. Standards in mathematics and reading were particularly high. However, although writing had improved from previous years it was still below provisional national figures in 2016. The school's accurate progress information and the achievement in pupils' English books clearly demonstrate that current pupils are making stronger progress in developing their writing skills.
- Governors are an enthusiastic and effective team; they know the school well and offer useful support to you and your senior team. They recently conducted a skills' audit, are reflective and review their work, making changes to increase their impact where necessary. Governors are aware that more accurate records of the detail of their challenge to senior leaders would help them to track the progress the school is making towards achieving its goals.
- Leaders plan and deliver individual programmes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as giving valuable advice to classroom teachers. Teachers use this information to plan activities to help pupils improve in lessons. Targeted support from skilful teaching assistants is particularly effective at supporting this group of pupils to develop their reading and writing skills.

- The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with their classmates. Leaders ensure that teachers are clear about who these pupils are and plan activities to suit their needs. Where pupils fall behind, teachers and teaching assistants intervene to make sure that pupils catch up quickly.
- Most pupils display very positive attitudes towards their learning. They apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are set and are keen to make their work the best it can be. Conduct around the school is very good and overall attendance is above the national average. While leaders have improved provision for the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, more needs to be done to challenge further improvements to the attendance of these two groups.
- Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject knowledge to design engaging lessons and bright stimulating displays in each of the classrooms. Teachers use questioning and discussion well to review and deepen pupils' understanding. There is a clear focus on pupils' intended learning and teachers ensure that pupils respond well to precise feedback to improve their work. Pupils' books in every year group demonstrate the pride they take in their work and how well they draft and refine their work to hone improvements.
- You have improved the level of challenge for the most able pupils by ensuring that all teachers are set targets to improve the progress they make. Consequently, standards of literacy, thinking skills and problem-solving have improved. Achievement in mathematics for this group has been strong for some time and the curriculum offers rich opportunities to become involved in music, art and sports. More recently, author exhibitions, trips, visits from writers and involvement in competitions are helping to raise aspirations and standards in English. Leaders are aware that more needs to be done to promote routine problem-solving and/or more frequent extended writing opportunities in science, French and the humanities subjects for this group in particular.
- The curriculum is interesting for pupils and promotes a wide range of skills and knowledge. Assemblies and lessons ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Pupils speak with pride about how they support each other in school and recall with confidence how they have studied different faiths and cultures.
- During the inspection, I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the day who reported that they are very satisfied with the school, the support their children receive and the progress pupils make. In addition, several parents and members of the wider community support the school to give presentations as part of 'aspirations week' or to participate in the harvest festival assembly. Although most parents are supportive of the school, surveys indicate that a significant minority are less satisfied and would like further progress information from the school. Governors and leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure improved communication with all parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the highest quality teaching, learning and assessment is shared across the school to challenge the most able pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes across the wider curriculum
- the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to improve
- better communication enables all parents to feel more involved in the life of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including: safeguarding arrangements, the progress made by the most able pupils, the progress pupils make in writing, how effectively teachers meet the needs of groups of pupils including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, several middle leaders, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a group of pupils. I spoke to a consultant from the local authority who works closely with the school. I visited six lessons, all accompanied by yourself or leaders, to observe teaching and to talk to pupils about what they were learning. I looked at pupils' work in their exercise books and spoke to them informally at breaktime. I considered the responses of 67 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed a range of documentation, including reports provided by the local authority, the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.

