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Miss Karen Parr
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Dear Miss Karen Parr

Short inspection of Oaklands Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018 with Julie Nash, Ofsted Inspector, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Oaklands Primary is a welcoming and vibrant school, where all pupils, regardless of their background or ability, are challenged to achieve their very best. Your determination that all pupils will be successful and your high aspirations permeate the school. The deputy headteacher and other senior leaders share your vision and you work well together to form an effective team.

Governors are very experienced and share the same drive and passion as the leadership team. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to secure further improvements. They are well informed through detailed plans and regular visits to the school and check regularly that the planned actions are taking shape.

Staff morale is high. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors appreciate the efforts the school makes to support them in helping their children learn. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'All the staff are brilliant and provide a fantastic, safe, secure and positive learning environment.'

Following the previous inspection, you were charged with 'improving teaching by making sure that all lessons engage pupils' interests and encourage pupils to think for themselves'. Pupils across the school are extremely polite, focused and well mannered. Their attitudes to learning are a credit to you and your staff. They show great interest in their work and listen carefully to adults. They check their own work before going to the teacher and are challenged to think harder for themselves. You

and the school's other leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely to ensure that it is continuing to improve. We agreed that in all lessons we visited, pupils were engaged and challenged to think for themselves.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead is diligent and rigorous in his work to ensure that pupils are safe and that staff are well trained in keeping them safe. Pre-employment checks and records are comprehensive and ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. All staff and governors receive regular training updates and any new information is passed on to staff swiftly. You work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive adequate support when necessary.

Almost all parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children are safe. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe at school. One pupil's comment that encapsulates many was: 'Teachers at Oaklands Primary love and care for you.' They are confident that staff would help them if they did have a problem and they know how to seek advice through their 'trusted adult'. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe and how to manage risk effectively, including when using the internet or being outside of school. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but if it does happen they have full confidence that it would be sorted out quickly.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to explore why results in the early years have been below average in recent years. I was interested to know the reasons for this and what you and your leaders are doing to bring about improvement, and how well children currently at the school are doing. You demonstrated to me that increasing numbers of children have been entering the school with abilities below those typical for their age. Scrutiny of children's work confirmed that many children do start school with lower than expected levels of knowledge and skills. Although children do make positive progress during their time in the early years, they do not reach national averages by the time they move to key stage 1. Rightly, you made this a key priority for your school improvement plan. You focused particularly on improving the performance of boys and disadvantaged children. Your current performance figures show that your strategies are leading to rapid improvement. The work that we looked at together demonstrated that the children in the early years are currently further ahead than last year's cohort were at this stage, particularly boys.
- The second line of enquiry considered the progress of key stage 1 pupils in reading and writing, particularly that of boys and disadvantaged children. In 2016, key stage 1 attainment was above national average in reading and writing. However, in 2017, attainment fell below the national average in these subjects. Leaders stripped back their approach to reading and completed an overhaul of the school's texts. Leaders identified a need to improve the quality of vocabulary pupils are being exposed to. This renewed approach to reading is having a

positive impact on the attainment of current key stage 1 pupils. Information provided by the school indicates that a good proportion of key stage 1 pupils, including boys and disadvantaged pupils, are attaining in line with the standards expected for their age. Pupils who read with inspectors say that they have a wide range of texts to choose from and teachers challenge them to read to their very best.

- A striking feature in key stage 1 was the progress being made in writing, particularly for boys. At the start of the academic year, a large proportion of pupils were not able to construct a complete sentence. As a result of effective teaching, pupils are now able to construct and compose stories that were impressive in both content and composition. Although pupils are entering and exiting the early years below what is expected for their age, by the time they leave Year 1 they have caught up.
- An important focus for this inspection was reviewing the provision of mathematics in key stage 2. This is because, in 2017, mathematics standards declined, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Mathematics had already been identified as a key issue in the school improvement plan. Leaders reacted swiftly to the decline and audited the school's provision. As a result, you have provided effective training for teachers that has had a positive impact on pupils' mathematical skills. However, too often teachers do not adjust their teaching swiftly enough to meet the needs of pupils, particularly the most able. You acknowledge that there is still more to do to ensure that the progress of all pupils in mathematics is good, including pupils who are capable of reaching the higher standards.
- My next line of enquiry was to review the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because published information in 2017 did not give a clear picture about the provision for these pupils, including pupils from the resource base. At the start of 2017, you took control of the resource base and set to work immediately in improving the provision. You have worked very diligently to provide an inclusive school which does not give up on any child who has complex needs. These pupils' needs are also well met in classrooms, both by teachers and teaching assistants through well-thought-out provision. This is because your staff are led well by the SEN leader.
- Finally, I asked what leaders are doing to improve attendance and reduce exclusions, since overall attendance is low and too many pupils are frequently absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils. You have introduced a range of strategies to monitor and improve attendance. Although there are signs of improvement, current information shows that attendance and persistent absence levels are worse than the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has risen steadily over the previous three academic years and has been above the national average. The impact of pupils joining the school has had a detrimental effect on the high rates of exclusions. Pupils with complex needs are given good support to help manage their behaviour. You have worked tirelessly with external agencies and specialist behaviour providers to provide a good level of education. Exclusion is only used

after all of the external support has been exhausted and when no signs of improvement are evident in pupils' behaviour.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress made by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in mathematics improves further so that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards are at least in line with the national averages
- they improve the consistency of teaching in mathematics so that the most able pupils can excel and achieve the higher standards that they are capable of
- they improve pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Middlemore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders and four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I took into account the 25 responses to Parent View, including 15 free-text comments. There were too few responses to the pupil survey to be meaningful. However, we spoke with pupils formally and informally during the day. I also considered the 39 responses to the staff survey. We observed teaching and learning jointly with you and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their exercise books and in their classrooms. We scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, safeguarding records, your school self-evaluation document and improvement plan, attendance and current pupils' assessment information.