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9 February 2016

Mr Paul Sutton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sutton

Short inspection of The Orchard Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your senior leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite a large building programme and a significant growth in pupil numbers, you have successfully maintained the ethos that makes The Orchard Primary School, in the words of one pupil, 'a safe, friendly environment in which to have a good education'.

You and your staff model the school's values of courage, determination, inspiration, respect, excellence and friendship. Strong relationships are a strength of the school. These are characterised by warmth, good humour and respect. For example, in the nursery, firm but gentle encouragement enabled one child to explain the shapes he was making in the sand, much to his clear delight.

Pupils behave well. They are confident, polite and happy to engage in conversations about their school. They cheerfully told me that they enjoy coming to school as 'it is a nice place to be'. Pupils socialise well at break- and lunchtimes whether energetically taking part in the sporting activities, such as dodgeball, or when making use of the well-thought-out playing areas outside. Pupils are motivated to learn. They know that adults expect them to take their fair share of responsibility for their learning and many readily do so. This is preparing them well for the next stage of their education.

You have strengthened provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children enjoy learning in the bright and welcoming environment. They make imaginative use of the thoughtfully laid out outside learning space. Adults take great care to support children in their learning and increasing numbers of children are achieving a good level of development.

The school community embraces difference and diversity. As a result, pupils display tolerance and respect. Topic work encourages them to explore different cultures, societies and lifestyles, which they do with enthusiasm. This is a clear demonstration of your effective response to the last inspection report which asked you to develop pupils' understanding of different backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils appreciate the wide range of additional activities that are made available to them before, during and after school. They are proud of the recent sporting successes of the school.

You and your staff are determined to prepare pupils well for life in the modern world by ensuring that the curriculum and learning activities are well suited to their interests and capabilities. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 make effective use of their tablet computers to guide their own learning and challenge themselves to attempt more difficult tasks. Inspection evidence showed that pupils are developing high levels of resilience and determination in their learning. This, together with your focus on developing the range of skills that adults use to support pupils' learning, are helping most groups of pupils to make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 2.

The previous inspection report noted that you and your staff communicate drive and ambition effectively. This continues to be the case. You have further strengthened your senior team with staff who have the skills and determination to improve the quality of education provided. Leaders are high profile around the school site. They model the calm, respectful approach, and also the strong teaching practice, that you expect from all staff.

Standards have remained high in reading and writing. Despite a dip in outcomes in these subjects in 2015, you have acted swiftly to ensure that they remain good for pupils currently in the school. The last inspection asked that you raise standards further by increasing the proportions of the most-able pupils reaching higher levels in writing. Determined action, including the detailed tracking of each pupil's progress, has led to the most-able pupils making stronger progress in writing and across other subjects at Key Stage 2.

Inspectors in the last inspection also asked you to raise the levels of attendance. You and your leaders continue to take robust action to do this by increasing your monitoring and communicating even more clearly with parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are very well kept and of a high quality. The school site is secure and well supervised at break- and lunchtimes. Pupils informed me that they feel safe and cared for. They know whom to go to if they have a problem and are confident that adults would resolve any issues that they have. Pupils can clearly explain how to keep safe when using the internet and, importantly, why they need to be vigilant. Personal safety is woven into literacy and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, where pupils write sensitively about topics such as how to respond to bullying. The very large majority of parents agree that the school looks after pupils well and keeps them safe. Effective training ensures that staff understand how to identify any concerns, and they are wholeheartedly committed to ensuring the well-being of the children in their care.

Inspection findings

- School leaders, including governors, share a clear vision that the school should develop each child academically and socially. They have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders know where there needs to be improvement and are taking appropriate action to strengthen these areas. There is strong evidence that governors robustly hold leaders to account for the standard of education provided and are determined that standards will rise.
- You have developed very effective leadership of others across the school. Your senior team shares your high expectations of all members of the school community. Each member of the team has a passion for their role and is held accountable for their actions. They lead improvements effectively and with confidence. For example, the leader responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has developed the provision quickly and is establishing strong relationships with parents. Evidence seen on inspection indicates that the needs of these pupils are identified accurately and effective support is put in place, which is enabling them to make strong progress.
- Outcomes for pupils at the school were high in 2014 and 2015, but fell slightly in reading and writing at Key Stage 2 in 2015. Leaders have analysed the reasons for this and have taken action to prevent this from happening again. For example, history topics include frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their analytical writing skills. Regular and careful monitoring of the progress made by all pupils indicates that the large majority of them are making good progress across many subjects, particularly in mathematics.

- Leaders are acutely aware of the range of needs that exists within the school community. They take effective action to make sure that pupils who are disadvantaged or have English as an additional language receive appropriate support to enable them to make good progress from their starting points. Your decision to increase the numbers of adults working with disadvantaged pupils in the early years classes is already helping them to make faster progress.
- Your commitment to preparing each child for life in the modern world is clearly understood and apparent in many aspects of school life. Teachers are challenged to plan learning activities that develop pupils' confidence and resilience. For example, skilful questioning by the teacher and teaching assistant in a Year 6 mathematics lesson enabled pupils to tackle successfully higher level calculations for themselves and grow in confidence as they did so.
- You have made very effective use of the funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Individual support, such as small-group work and one-to-one help for pupils at Key Stage 2 is helping them to make good progress across all subjects and significantly better progress than that of their peers in mathematics.
- You are aware that some aspects of teaching are not always as consistent as they should be. In Key Stage 1, planning of learning does not always include sufficient opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their mastery of the skills that they are learning in mathematics. At times, learning can lack the pace to maintain the interest of all pupils and this can lead to them becoming fidgety or distracted.
- Your clear expectation that feedback for pupils should be appropriate to their specific needs is not always consistently applied. Feedback can be too general to enable pupils to learn from their mistakes, or master a specific skill.
- Leaders monitor pupils' behaviour and attendance carefully. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection. Leaders have taken a robust approach to reducing the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Direct communication with parents takes place when absence becomes a concern. There has been a sharp drop in the numbers who are persistently absent from school in this academic year. However, you recognise that more needs to be done to maintain the regular attendance of all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teaching is consistently good across all key stages by routinely monitoring the quality of planning, the pace of learning, marking and feedback
- all teachers apply whole-school policies on assessment and feedback consistently and effectively
- recent actions to reduce absence become embedded and lead to sustained, regular attendance of all pupils.

Yours sincerely

John Lucas

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of 21 pupils. Together with you, I visited a range of lessons to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. I also spent time speaking informally with pupils at break- and lunchtimes. I reviewed school documents about safeguarding, including the single central record, attendance and behaviour records, and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I considered 93 responses from parents on Parent View.