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Mrs Catherine Pointon  
Headteacher  
Oxhey First School  
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Dear Mrs Catherine Pointon

### **Short inspection of Oxhey First School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2017, 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 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2015 and have appointed leaders to key areas to further strengthen the leadership team. There have been several changes in staff since the last inspection.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that all teaching was consistently good or better. This has rightly remained a priority for the school. Since your appointment you have been relentless in your drive and determination to tackle underperformance. This has enabled you, with the support of your leadership team and governors, to bring about rapid change in a relatively short period of time.

You have ensured that new members of the leadership team have developed the necessary skills to support school improvement. For example, the recently appointed early years leader has further developed the learning environment across the foundation stage to promote children's independent learning. As a result of your relentless focus on high expectations, all classrooms have 'challenge bays' to support different areas of learning. Activities are also adjusted to meet the needs of all pupils and provide appropriate challenge. A good example of this was seen in Reception where children were engrossed in a mathematics activity. Children were cutting out numbered teeth for a crocodile and putting them in order in the crocodile's mouth, which challenged them to count in twos.

You and leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and learning. You

also regularly commission external consultant support to validate your findings each half term.

Other areas for improvement identified in the last report included the development of exciting and relevant writing opportunities to promote pupils' progress and maintain their interest and concentration. You have responded effectively to this recommendation. The English lessons observed during the inspection encouraged older pupils to develop a more sophisticated sentence structure including the use of clauses. You have also developed a 'discovery curriculum' to capture pupils' imagination and provide opportunities for them to write across the curriculum.

In every classroom there is a clear focus on 'tiger learning'. This has been developed by the school to ensure that pupils develop good learning behaviours. Pupils are encouraged to try hard, ignore distractions, be a group worker, be enthusiastic and take risks. One parent commented, 'There is lots of focus on developing resilience and kindness as well as academic achievement.' During the inspection, I observed many examples of pupils working together to tackle challenges in their learning. For example, in key stage 1, pupils were working together to share their ideas about the information they could gather from a picture and make predictions.

You and your leaders are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils at Oxhey. Pupils have access to a wealth of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities both during and after the school day. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the different clubs available including gardening, choir and a variety of sports clubs. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to compete with other schools and, on the day of the inspection, pupils were involved in a tag rugby tournament. Pupils also benefit from an extended curriculum which operates for a six-week period each term. Pupils report that they love the extended curriculum activities because, 'you get to do things that you wouldn't normally be able to do such as, origami, quilling, and other crafts'.

Leaders and governors have a shared vision and high expectations for everyone at Oxhey First School. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ensure that effective systems are quickly put in place to address any weaknesses. Your governors participate in a significant amount of training, which enables them to make informed strategic decisions. Training has also supported governors' ability to offer effective challenge and support to you and other leaders.

Pupils behave well in lessons, at breaktimes and around school during unstructured periods. Pupils are welcoming, courteous and show good manners at all times to adults and each other. They are confident sharing their learning and talking about how school teaches them to keep themselves safe. For example, they could talk about the different forms of bullying such as cyber bullying. Pupils knew what to do if this ever happened to them, including using the friendship bench on the playground and approaching a 'Bully Buster' for support.

Further work is required to ensure that strategies recently implemented are fully embedded. These include improvements to pupils' writing, the consistent application

of the handwriting policy and ensuring assessments of what children can do when they first join the school are accurate.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at Oxhey First School. You have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and are understood by the whole school community. Records are detailed and clearly demonstrate actions taken by the school and their outcomes. Designated safeguarding leads follow up any actions needed from external agencies, in a timely manner. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive regular training and updates which reflect the needs of the school and its context. For example, several governors have completed the online safer recruitment training, which was essential due to the need to recruit a number of new staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, I met with you to agree several key lines of enquiry to ascertain the extent to which you have maintained a good standard of education. Early years provision is a strength of the school. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 was above the national average. In recent months, early years provision has been further developed to support children to achieve at the highest standard by the end of their time in the foundation stage. The indoor and outdoor learning environments promote learning across all areas of the curriculum. Children engage fully in their learning and are well supported by adults who skilfully intervene to offer challenge and enhance the development of language skills.
- The teaching of phonics has been a priority for the school. Effective practice is now embedded. Children have access to a wide range of opportunities to apply their phonic knowledge. For example, I observed children thoroughly enjoying a phonics game that involved jumping on a number of letters on the floor, putting the letters together to make a word, and then writing the word on a chalkboard.
- Assessment systems are in place in Reception and are now used effectively to track what children can do, and to plan new activities that excite and challenge them.
- The early years leader communicates a real sense of passion and is committed to sustaining recent improvements. Leaders have correctly identified that assessments on entry to the school are not always accurate. Leaders acknowledge that this area of practice must be developed so that no learning time is lost and children are able to quickly build upon their existing skills.
- In recent years, attendance has been above the national average for all pupils and for groups of pupils. In 2016, a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent. However, you have effective systems in place to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils including rewards for good attendance. You are well aware of, and are able to address, the underlying reasons for any current instances of absence. If you have any concerns, you are quick to liaise with parents and agencies to ensure that pupils begin to work towards improving their

attendance.

- Consistently strong teaching across the school is resulting in improvements in pupils' progress. Good progress was seen in almost all books scrutinised during the inspection. The written work seen in key stage 1 was of a high standard. However, too few pupils were able to write using a joined script. This is a requirement for pupils to be able to achieve at the highest standard by the end of key stage 1. In other year groups, some inconsistencies were seen in pupils' writing which did not always reflect the school's handwriting policy. This has a negative impact on the presentation of pupils' work.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that writing activities are exciting and engaging and that there is a clear progression of skills in each year group. The school has correctly identified gaps in pupils' writing skills and is effectively addressing these through the teaching of basic skills. This is ensuring that sentence structure, punctuation and grammar are used to best effect. The English leader has reviewed the different genres covered in each year group, and has introduced a number of effective strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing. These recent changes are supporting better rates of progress. However, new strategies need to be embedded to ensure that improvements are sustained.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of basic skills and other writing strategies are fully embedded so that pupils can achieve at the highest possible standard
- the handwriting policy is followed consistently throughout the school to ensure that the quality of presentation improves
- assessments of what children can do when they first join school are accurate and allow teachers to meet children's needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Johnstone  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss and agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents including your assessment analysis, school self-evaluation and your school development plan.

I conducted a learning walk in the early years foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2 jointly with you. I talked to pupils throughout the inspection about their learning. I undertook book scrutinies with leaders and reviewed the quality of learning in English across the school.

I met with the school's office manager to review the school's single central record and safer recruitment procedures.

I met with you to review child protection logs and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements.

I held a meeting with four governors including the chair and vice-chair. I also spoke to the school improvement officer on the telephone.

I met with parents on the school playground and reviewed the 50 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. I took account of the seven responses to the staff questionnaire and the 33 responses to the pupil questionnaire.