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Mrs Janice Mardell  
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Dear Mrs Mardell

### **Short inspection of Overstone Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 February 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Both you and the governing body have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development in your school. You are right to focus on reading and also the rates of progress for the most able pupils, which are not yet strong enough. The governing body is passionate and effective in asking the right questions to make sure the focus on school improvement is sharp and relevant. Together with your own good judgement and incisive evaluative skills, this ensures that the school is self-aware and actively seeks to improve for the benefit of the pupils.

Pupils are safe at school and say they feel safe. They are clear about how they can keep themselves safe whether, for example, using roads, keeping fit or using the internet. They are clear that if they were worried about themselves or a friend they would tell an adult, and they are certain that it would be dealt with satisfactorily. Pupils say there is little or no bullying at the school and this is supported by school documentation and the views of parents. They are also unanimous in their view that discrimination due to race, sexual orientation, gender, economic background or religion is 'just wrong'. Rates of attendance are improving, and this is true for all groups of children, with a pleasing reduction in the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent.

You make good use of the expertise in the school, and have created a culture where teachers and other adults share good practice with each other and work collaboratively to improve outcomes and experiences for pupils. Members of staff spoken with were unanimous that they not only valued this aspect of the school, but it is also one of its key strengths. More widely, you and other staff make effective use of the local cluster of schools, where development of teaching methods is a focus, and the staff moderate their marking and assessment with other schools to ensure that it remains accurate. You also make good use of the local authority school adviser, whose reports help you to identify and focus on improvement areas with greater clarity. These partnerships have helped to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection, and school records show the impact of teaching over time is good. Teachers are also much more aware of what outstanding practice looks like and are much clearer about what they need to do to improve to this level.

Outcomes for pupils declined last year, and this was especially true for the most able and boys' reading. As a consequence, much good work has gone into changing the school's teaching and promotion of reading this year. Pupils feel strongly that they are now better readers and they value the wide range of books available to them. They also value the reading logs they take home to record reading sessions with their parents and carers, and uptake and use of these are high.

The performance information indicates that outcomes in reading are improving for current pupils and there is much less difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, it is still too early to be sure that the work in reading has had a sustainable impact. Outcomes in this area are still not yet in line with those for writing and mathematics. Improving outcomes for boys in writing are much clearer, and this reflects changes to the curriculum and provision. Pupils and parents rightly value the 'talk for writing' strategy because it has led to pupils' increased confidence and proficiency in writing, especially for boys.

You use and evaluate well the pupil premium funding to improve rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils, and there is little variation in performance between this group of pupils and their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in lessons. Teachers ensure that these pupils are given tasks which are challenging but appropriate for their needs in order to promote their good progress. Consequently, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective.

In some lessons, work set for the most able pupils is not challenging enough and, as a result, this group of pupils are not making as much progress as they could across the school. In some lessons, the most able pupils spend too much time completing work that is too easy for them, before they get on to work which begins to stretch them. Pupils report they sometimes have to wait for other pupils to catch up before they go on to work they find more interesting. Pupils feel that the recent introduction of 'hot' and 'cold' tasks has presented more challenge, but its use is not yet consistent. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write in depth in subjects other than English.

During the previous inspection, you were asked to look at how pupils respond to and use the feedback they get on their work. It is quite clear from looking at books that pupils use improvement points from each assessed piece of work to move on and make progress. All pupils spoken with value the method used to let them know how to improve. The feedback pupils receive contributes to the good rate of progress they make.

Pupils and their parents and carers rate highly the wide range of extra-curricular activities you have introduced. This is particularly true of the range of sporting activities and competitions, of which the vast majority of pupils take advantage and enjoy. Pupils also value the range of trips organised for them, such as a trip to London Zoo and another to the Sea Life Centre. They also appreciate the visitors that come to school, such as a recent visit by an expert in Ancient Greece. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all who responded to the survey or Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire said they agree their child is happy and safe at school, and they would recommend it to others (with almost all of these responses 'strongly' agreeing). They value the information they receive about their child's progress and also the open and approachable culture, where they feel it allows them to easily voice any concerns or ask questions. One parent commented, 'I've always felt like I've been included.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that there are strong, fit for purpose procedures and systems in place for the reporting and monitoring of any concerns that staff may have about the pupils. You take swift and appropriate action when you need to involve outside agencies and you do not give up when you think they could do more to support a child in your care.

You ensure that the process for employing new members of staff is thorough and includes relevant pre-employment checks, which are included on the single central record. Governors regularly and robustly monitor these arrangements. Staff and governors have also had relevant training to keep pupils safe and they all know how to raise any concerns they may have about a child's welfare. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in your school, so that children are kept safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Apart from ensuring that safeguarding is effective, my main lines of enquiry for this inspection were to evaluate how effectively the most able pupils achieve, how well reading is taught and promoted, the achievement of boys in reading and writing, whether attendance is improving and how well leaders, including governors, are promoting school improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that the areas of improvement from the last inspection have been effectively addressed, including evaluating the impact of the pupil premium spending, gaining a better understanding of outstanding practice and increasing opportunities for the children in the Reception Year to engage in

meaningful physical activities.

- Some of the work the most able pupils do is too easy and does not stretch or challenge their thinking well enough. This happens too frequently because they do the same work as everyone else before they can tackle work they find more interesting.
- Provision for and the teaching of reading is improving and this is especially true for boys. The school has recently changed its curriculum and choice of books and this has been popular with all pupils. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work.
- Work to improve outcomes for boys in writing has been successful, with the 'talk for writing' scheme proving popular and effective, although there are not yet enough opportunities to write in depth in subjects such as science or religious studies.
- Rates of pupils' attendance are improving and this is true for almost all groups of pupils. Fewer pupils are persistently absent.
- The school is accurate and robust in its self-assessment and has a clear and committed understanding of improvement strategies. Governors provide good challenge, which contributes further to school improvement, and the school uses the local authority adviser and a cluster of local schools well to bring further expertise to its practice.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of the pupil premium are well supported and make good progress.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils tackle more difficult work which stretches and challenges their learning in order to deepen their thinking
- strategies for teaching reading, especially relating to boys, remain a continuing focus, so that outcomes in this area are as strong as those for mathematics and writing
- there are more opportunities for pupils to write in greater depth, so they can master the skills of writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Mitchley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I held meetings with you, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the coordinator for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and five members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair. I spoke with parents at the school gate as they brought their children to school in the morning and also took account of their views through 42 responses to Parent View and the 32 responses to the free-text service. I visited each classroom with you and some governors to see the learning that was taking place and I looked closely at a range of books from a range of subjects in key stage 1 and in key stage 2. I examined a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the development plan, external adviser reports, school performance information and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils.