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Mrs Charlotte Stewart
Acting Headteacher
Larkrise Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Stewart

Short inspection of Larkrise Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school is going through a period of significant change. The previous headteacher left the school in December 2017 and you have been in post as acting headteacher for five weeks. Governors have successfully recruited a new headteacher who will join the school in June 2018. There are several new members of staff and some key leaders are new to their role this academic year. As a result, changes in staff and leadership have slowed the pace of school improvement.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say that their school is welcoming to everyone and that almost everyone follows the school's '5 Cs' values: confident, creative, caring, curious and celebrating. Most pupils I talked to told me that art is their favourite subject and they were keen to tell me about a forthcoming art exhibition they are staging. Pupils are appreciative of the range of extra-curricular activities that are available to them, such as the choir and art club. They enjoy the frequent opportunities to learn outdoors and speak passionately about the need to respect and care for each other. Pupils are adamant that they, and the staff, value the similarities and differences that exist between people. As one pupil said, 'Everyone has a right to be different.'

Parents and carers expressed very positive views about the school. They rightly recognise that the school's commitment to supporting pupils and keeping them safe is a strength. Parents said that the school listens to their views and, where possible,

addresses concerns, citing the new school perimeter fence as an example. Many parents said that, as a result of action taken by school leaders, communication had significantly improved this year. One parent summarised the views of many, saying, 'Larkrise is a welcoming, safe, inclusive and positive space where children can develop as individuals.'

Over time, governors have provided effective support and challenge for leaders. However, more recently, changes in leadership have led to governors directing their time and attention to the recruitment of a new headteacher. Governors recognise that they now need to refocus their efforts on supporting school leaders to secure good outcomes for pupils.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils' attendance continued to improve. In recent years, pupils' attendance declined and remained below the national average. However, during this school year, leaders' effective action has led to a significant improvement in attendance. Leaders were also asked to raise standards, particularly in key stage 1. Leaders' work to improve standards initially worked well in key stage 2, and standards rose in 2015 and 2016. However, standards at the end of key stage 2 dipped in 2017. In key stage 1, leaders' actions have not yet led to sufficient improvement and standards currently remain too low. Writing was also identified as an area of concern during the previous inspection, and it remains an area for development. Although staff have received training about how to raise standards, this has not yet led to a sustained improvement in pupils' writing. In addition, the school's system for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress is not yet used as well as it could be. This means that school leaders and governors do not have a clear enough picture of the progress that pupils are making.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe is rightly seen by leaders to be of the utmost importance. You have ensured that all staff and pupils receive frequent training on all aspects of staying safe. You consider carefully the needs of pupils, providing individually tailored support. You also ensure that the curriculum covers appropriate safeguarding issues. This approach ensures that pupils are able to develop the skills they need to stay safe. Every pupil spoken to during the inspection could identify an adult in school who would help them if they had a problem. Pupils were confident in their knowledge about how to stay safe, physically, emotionally and when using the internet.

Staff follow the school's policies and procedures well to report any concerns that they have about pupils' welfare or well-being. Written records about any concerns and the actions taken by leaders are timely and thorough. Leaders work closely with families and outside agencies for the protection of pupils. The single central register of staff pre-employment checks complies with statutory requirements. Governors and leaders routinely seek to strengthen safeguarding practice. This level of commitment sets the culture of vigilance throughout the school.

Governors monitor any incidents, such as bullying, and how these are resolved. They also question and challenge leaders about the impact of their actions taken in response to any concerns. Governors are aware that in the past there have been a few incidents of bullying in the school. They have taken this issue seriously and have actively sought to hear pupils' views. Pupils explained that there had been a few incidents of bullying but were also confident in the action the school has taken to resolve this. Pupils said that they feel safe and that any concerns are dealt with well by staff.

Inspection findings

- You have, rightly, made improving attendance a key priority this year. In recent years, too many pupils have missed too much school. Leaders and staff now emphasise the importance of coming to school every day and pursue vigorously the reasons for any absence. The school's tenacity and close work with families to reduce absence is paying off. Overall attendance rates are rising and there has been a considerable reduction in the number of pupils who are frequently absent. While your actions are having a notable impact, however, you recognise that there is more to be done to continue to improve pupils' attendance.
- School leaders are dedicated, enthusiastic and determined. However, they have relatively recently taken up their posts and many are inexperienced. Leaders are currently receiving external support to help them to improve the school. Governors are providing some effective support and challenge. Nevertheless, governors could be more rigorous in checking the validity and consistency of judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. External monitoring indicates that not all teaching is consistently good; however, this is not reflected in the school's self-evaluation. Leaders have not yet responded sufficiently by taking the necessary action to improve the quality of teaching.
- Many pupils are working at appropriate standards for their age. Pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, progress in reading and, in particular, writing continues to be variable in some year groups. Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, including checking pupils' work and assessment information, is not yet systematic. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing. This means that work to tackle any underachievement is not targeted as precisely as it could be.
- Your decision to prioritise provision for disadvantaged pupils this year is well judged. You have planned strategies to help pupils to make better progress. However, this work is at an early stage of development and, currently, too few disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.
- You have taken effective action to meet the needs of the rising number of pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour. You have increased the support for these pupils and, as a result, these pupils' behaviour is managed well and causes minimal disturbance to other pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue their work to improve pupils' attendance
- they take effective action to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 1, so that it is consistently good
- they strengthen the school's assessment systems and monitoring of pupils' work to enable leaders to have a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning
- all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make consistently good progress, particularly in 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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, governors and a representative of the local authority. Together with you and other senior leaders, we visited classrooms, talked to pupils and looked at pupils' work in books. We met to review pupils' work and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with other leaders. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils informally during breaktime. I observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school. I checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, monitoring and improvement, and written records of meetings. I reviewed the pre-employment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. I also took account of the 79 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Parents' views were taken into account through discussions with parents before school and the 148 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. In addition, I took account of parents' free-text comments and the 20 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.