

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



5 April 2018

Mr Daniel Harrison  
Headteacher  
Ox Close Primary School  
Ox Close Crescent  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6RU

Dear Mr Harrison

### **Short inspection of Ox Close Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

School leaders are extremely passionate, skilled and committed to providing high-quality education to pupils at Ox Close Primary School. Leaders ensure that the school motto, 'Be the best you can be', permeates throughout the school. Staff, parents and carers, and pupils share the vision of excellence. Pupils and staff strive to reach the highest standards and they take every opportunity to improve and work hard. Teachers and pupils have excellent working relationships. Pupils are confident and self-assured learners who delight in taking part in lessons and building up their knowledge.

Teachers ensure that they plan learning well. Pupils make rapid progress in their learning because most work challenges pupils and meets their needs. The atmosphere in lessons is exciting. Pupils listen carefully to the clear explanations that teachers provide. They then work together or independently to develop their skills. In an English lesson, the teacher took every opportunity to develop pupils' vocabulary and skills of inference, while carefully checking pupils' understanding. In mathematics, pupils debated and reasoned about fractions, using subject-specific vocabulary well. In geography, pupils enjoyed acting out an earthquake scenario,

playing different roles and developing their geographical knowledge alongside literacy skills as they recounted the event from different perspectives.

Leaders have effectively tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils have a wealth of opportunity to practise their writing across the curriculum. In each subject, there is a variety of tasks available for pupils to develop further. In all year groups, there is a focus on developing vocabulary. Teachers model the use of subject-specific vocabulary well and pupils learn rapidly from this. Following excellent professional development, teachers' questioning is now a strength. Teachers ask many questions that make pupils think hard and deepen their understanding and knowledge. Middle leaders have opportunities to work alongside senior leaders, the local authority and other schools to develop their skills. Middle leaders meet regularly with their staff and senior leaders, which ensures accountability at all levels. Middle leaders also present information to governors and answer challenging questions, which further improves leadership skills and accountability.

Leaders agree that although the school is rapidly improving and the vast majority of pupils are making excellent progress, more challenge for the most able disadvantaged pupils would ensure that even more pupils reach the highest standards. Leaders also agree that recent changes to the assessment system in the wider curriculum need to embed, alongside providing more opportunities for pupils to learn subject-specific skills.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that training for all staff is up to date. Staff receive regular updates about safeguarding in staff meetings throughout the year. Leaders have completed additional training such as safer recruitment training and training about the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders keep appropriate records about safeguarding which explain the actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. Even so, in some instances, the details of actions taken are rather brief. The school works well with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need.

Bullying does not happen often here. When it does, leaders take appropriate action. Pupils are confident that they can ask any adult for help and support and they will receive it. They trust one another and have a 'children's champion' whom they know will give them advice and support.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders are aware that, historically, girls outperform boys. Boys and girls both make excellent progress and attain standards in line with or above the national average in end-of-key-stage tests and are well prepared for their next stage of education. Leaders are keen to diminish the differences between girls' and boys' achievements and so ensure that boys involve themselves fully in their learning. The curriculum is boy friendly, for example having superhero, space and pirate topics. Girls are equally happy and enthusiastic about these topics.
- Current pupils' progress information and work in books show that girls and boys make excellent and rapid progress across the curriculum. In some year groups and in some topics, boys outperform girls. Leaders ensure that high standards of teaching lead to excellent outcomes for the vast majority of pupils, but agree that additional challenge for the most able disadvantaged pupils would lead to even more pupils achieving at the highest levels.
- Leaders' spending of additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged allows teachers to teach pupils in smaller groups and for interventions to take place quickly. For example, in early years, children receive additional support as soon as they need it because there are sufficient adults to implement this. During the inspection, small-group intervention to develop phonics skills helped children with their early reading and writing skills.
- A greater proportion of children in early years, including those who are disadvantaged, are on target to reach a good level of development than in the previous academic year.
- Leaders are implementing appropriate actions to improve the quality of the wider curriculum. For example, they recognised that assessment was not as robust as in the core curriculum of English and mathematics. Working alongside staff, leaders have put in place a new assessment system, which is helping to improve standards in the wider curriculum such as in history, geography and art.
- The wider curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their literacy skills. Even so, opportunities for pupils to practise subject-specific skills, such as map-reading skills or analysing historical information, are not as frequent as they could be to give pupils an even deeper and wider understanding of these subjects.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have further opportunities to develop subject-specific skills within the wider curriculum and staff use the new assessment system to ensure that pupils make as much progress in these subjects as they do in mathematics and English
- provision for the most able pupils is further developed, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, so that more pupils attain at the highest levels.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with members of the governing body including the vice-chair. I visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and at breaktime. I scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects in a sample of their workbooks with you and your deputy headteacher. I reviewed information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking on the performance of teachers. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils, including records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents, were also checked. I read the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 55 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 36 pupils' responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.