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Mr Garry Ratcliffe
Executive Headteacher
Oakfield Primary Academy
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Dear Mr Ratcliffe

Short inspection of Oakfield Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 2018 with Catherine Davies, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2014.

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 grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Weaknesses in leadership and teaching since the last inspection have resulted in a steady decline in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2. Leaders have not identified variations in the quality of teaching quickly enough or addressed weaknesses in practice rigorously enough. A lack of clarity about the priorities for development, since the previous inspection, has hampered the necessary improvements in teaching and learning.

Since your return to the school as headteacher, in September 2018, you have secured notable improvements. You have established clear direction and purpose and a shared sense of urgency among staff about the need to improve the school's work. You have rightly identified the need to secure rapid improvements in teaching so that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they should, particularly in reading and mathematics. You and your leadership team have already taken concerted action to address weaknesses in teaching. As a result, the quality of pupils' learning has begun to improve and standards are rising. However, your senior leadership team is keenly aware that there is more to do before pupils throughout the school achieve consistently well. For example, historical weaknesses in teaching mean that some pupils have significant gaps in knowledge and understanding which are hindering their progress. Variations in the quality of teaching remain.

Some pupils are achieving well, for instance:

- children make strong progress during early years and are well prepared for learning in Year 1
- the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check improved in 2018 and were in line with the national average
- pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1, in 2018, were in line with national averages in reading and writing and were above the national average in mathematics
- pupils' progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 improved last year and they achieved well in this subject.

However, despite these strengths, teaching is not yet sufficiently strong to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and most able, achieve as well as they should. You have successfully developed an atmosphere in which your staff are able to exchange open, honest and professional views about the school's performance. Teachers have regular opportunities to discuss pupils' learning and share ideas about teaching. Consequently, the quality of teamwork and staff morale have improved considerably. Staff, parents and carers, trustees and governors recognise the recent rapid improvements in the school's work. As one governor commented, 'It's still a work in progress, but staff are on board and the school is back on track.'

Parents are positive about the school. They feel that their children are safe, happy and learning well. Parents are confident that you and your leadership team will ensure that the school continues to improve. Clear routines, strong adult-pupil relationships and high expectations of pupils' behaviour provide an effective framework for the school's work. Teachers maintain a quiet and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and pupils are keen to learn. Pupils behave well throughout the school day.

The key issues for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been partially addressed. Pupils now have access to a wider range of good-quality books than at the time of the last inspection, and they develop a love of reading. More frequent opportunities to read mean that pupils have developed a more extensive range of spoken and written vocabulary than previously. This contributed to the improvements in pupils' writing outcomes at the end of key stage 2, in 2018. However, some aspects of the school's work identified for improvement have not been addressed fully enough. For instance, pupils' reading outcomes have not risen sufficiently, and leaders have not secured the necessary improvements in teaching to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team ensure that safeguarding policies are fit for purpose and followed consistently throughout the school. You use training well to ensure that staff and governors are clear about safeguarding procedures. As a result, they are

confident about what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety.

Leaders take pupils' safety very seriously. You work closely and constructively with parents and agencies, such as children's services. You act swiftly and effectively whenever a pupil is considered at risk of harm.

Senior leadership ensures that recruitment checks on staff and adults working in school are completed fully and in accordance with statutory guidance. The school's tidy, attractive and well-maintained environment contributes well to pupils' learning and to their enjoyment of school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused particularly on:
 - pupils' safety and well-being, including their attendance
 - how effectively teaching supports pupils' progress in reading
 - disadvantaged pupils' progress, particularly in reading and mathematics
 - how successfully the school supports pupils at risk of exclusion.
- In recent years, overall attendance has been consistently lower than the national average. Last year, however, improvements in the monitoring of and support for pupils' attendance led to a considerable increase in attendance rates in 2018. Leaders track pupils' absences closely and follow up any concerns quickly. They work constructively and effectively with parents, agencies and other schools to support pupils' regular attendance. Information about pupils' attendance indicates that improvements have been sustained in the current academic year.
- A more systematic approach to the teaching of reading has been introduced by leaders during the past few months. They have made good use of training to improve teachers' understanding of how to teach specific reading skills more effectively. While it is too soon for improvements in the teaching of reading to be fully established, there are early indications that pupils are making better progress in reading.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the quality and range of books available to pupils. Consequently, pupils enjoy reading and develop personal preferences for different types of book and authors. Attractive displays about popular authors and their books, combined with engaging events such as the recent poetry workshop, contribute well to pupils' interest in reading.
- Leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils' progress is too variable across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics. They have made a good start in improving teaching and learning for disadvantaged pupils by making sure that teachers have accurate and up-to-date information about pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders are now working with teachers to increase their understanding about how to support pupils' specific needs more effectively.
- The quality of support for pupils at risk of exclusion has been improved. Leaders

have ensured that recent initiatives, such as the introduction of mentoring and the use of nurture groups, have made a significant difference to pupils' emotional well-being, self-esteem and confidence. Carefully considered plans to support individual pupils ensure a consistent and effective approach across the school. A reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions during the past year illustrates the school's success in improving support for vulnerable pupils.

- Leaders have strengthened the quality of supervision during breaktimes. Effective training for staff has ensured that adults are more successful at spotting potential friction between pupils in the playground at an early stage, so they are able to intervene quickly. As a result, the incidence of poor behaviour during breaktimes has reduced considerably.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the quality of teaching are fully established so that all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and most able, make consistently strong progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection team visited all classes with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during classroom visits and spoke to pupils about their learning. They also looked separately at a sample of pupils' workbooks.

The inspection team had meetings with you and with a number of senior leaders. Meetings were also held with three governors and four trustees, including the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the board of trustees. Inspectors spoke with pupils in the playground during lunchtime.

The inspection team took account of 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 free-text comments. The school's website was reviewed and a range of documents were scrutinised, including the summary of the school's effectiveness and school improvement plan. Inspectors also looked at a range of safeguarding documentation.