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20 April 2017

Fiona Pearce
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Dear Mrs Pearce

Short inspection of Orchard Vale Community School

Following my visit to the school on 30 March 2017 with Alexander Baxter, 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

You took up your role as head of school in September 2016, having been the deputy prior to that. Under your strong leadership, the school continues to thrive. Your analysis of the school's many strengths and the areas that it still needs to work on is perceptive. This allows you to focus the efforts of leaders at all levels, including governors, on precise targets to drive forward further school improvement. For example, recent initiatives in the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 are already beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, although, as you recognise, more work is needed in this area.

You are very well supported by other leaders in the school and middle leadership is an emerging strength. Leaders in charge of year groups and of particular subjects are working very well as a team, learning from each other and from other schools across the multi-academy trust. As a result, they are making important contributions to sustaining the school's strengths and improving other aspects of the school's work.

Governors are also very well informed about the school and can talk knowledgeably about the way they exercise their role of strategic oversight. They, too, are playing an important role in the school's continuous push for improvement. They are well

supported by the multi-academy trust, Ventrus (formerly the Primary Academies Trust). The executive headteacher, the chief executive officer and other officers of the trust provide important support in, for example, teacher development and training. Middle leaders spoke appreciatively of the way the trust, in partnership with the school, was helping them to develop their teaching practice and leadership abilities.

As a consequence of this highly effective leadership at all levels, the school has addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection with great success. Teaching now provides a consistently high level of challenge to pupils across the school, from Reception to Year 6. In addition, the early years foundation stage has improved rapidly.

All the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. This is no surprise, as staff have ensured that Orchard Vale provides a rich learning environment, replete with many stimulating resources to help children learn.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding lead, you oversee a strong culture of safeguarding. You and other leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding and communicate this effectively to all staff. Training for all staff is up to date and regularly refreshed throughout the year. The work the school does with other agencies, such as children's services, is thorough. Rigorous procedures are in place to monitor visitors to the school vigilantly. The single central record of pre-employment checks made on teachers and other staff is efficiently maintained. As a result of all this work, pupils say they feel safe and all the parents who responded to the online survey agreed. Overall, therefore, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry during this inspection concerned the progress that pupils make in their reading in key stage 2. The results of the national curriculum assessment in reading in 2016 showed that all pupils reached the expected standard and that they had made exceptionally strong progress. The pupils currently in the school are making similarly rapid progress. Highly effective teaching enables them to interrogate texts with sophistication, not just in English lessons but also during, for example, topic work in history. Pupils demonstrate high-level comprehension skills and can make inferences and deductions from complex texts. The most able readers, in particular, are very fluent indeed. All this means that the school's leadership is demonstrating a very good capacity to sustain high attainment and fast progress in reading for pupils in the school.
- The inspection's second line of enquiry related to the progress that pupils in key stage 2 make in mathematics. In contrast to the results in reading, the 2016 results showed that pupils in key stage 2 made progress at a rate that was

broadly in line with the national average. You and other leaders are aware that this is an area for further improvement and have taken swift action to address it. The new mathematics leader is introducing changes to the way mathematics is taught and these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, although they have not had time to reveal their full impact yet.

- Extensive scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are making good progress in mathematics from their individual starting points. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's clear focus on the key elements of the new national curriculum means that pupils' fluency, reasoning and problem-solving are improving, as is their confidence in mathematics.
- A third line of enquiry related to the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1, especially for disadvantaged pupils. School leaders have targeted this as an area for improvement very effectively this year. Initial assessments of pupils' phonics ability have been strengthened and this means teachers have an accurate understanding of the precise level at which to pitch teaching. This is true for the most able and for those pupils with complex speech and language difficulties, catered for in the school's specialist area resource base. As a result of effective teaching, pupils make good progress in their phonics, whatever their individual starting points might be, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The inspection's final line of enquiry concerned the early years foundation stage. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Due to extremely strong leadership of this area, the provision for children in the early years has been transformed. Assessment is used very well to identify and tackle children's individual needs and to adapt teaching accordingly. Initial assessments of children's abilities on entry to Reception are helped by close liaison with the nursery and the pre-school.
- Children in the early years learn well in a balanced programme of adult-led and child-initiated activities. As a result of a high level of challenge, children make good, and in many cases rapid, progress. For example, there is a strong focus on writing in the early years and the successful impact of this can be seen in the development of pupils' written skills recorded in their learning journeys. The indoor facilities in the early years foundation stage are very well adapted to the needs of teaching, although the outdoor area is not as well developed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of mathematics continues to build on recent initiatives so that pupils in key stage 2 make faster progress, in line with the rapid progress they make in reading
- the provision in the early years develops even further by improving the outdoor space in order to enhance children's learning.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors met with you and other leaders at the start of the day to discuss the school's self-evaluation and draw up the key lines of enquiry that the inspection would follow. Inspectors visited lessons, where they looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. Further examples of pupils' work were examined by inspectors together with school leaders. Inspectors also held meetings with teachers, including middle leaders, pupils, governors and representatives of the trust. Inspectors listened to a range of pupils reading aloud. Both before and during the inspection, a range of documents provided by the school were examined. Inspectors also took into account 30 responses to the survey of parental opinion, Parent View, and the responses to the surveys of pupils and staff.