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Mrs Jane Tipple
Principal
Oaks Primary Academy
Oak Tree Avenue
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Dear Mrs Tipple

Short inspection of Oaks Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 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 March 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since becoming part of Leigh Academies Trust in 2015, the school has gone from strength to strength. Standards and attendance have risen considerably. You and your fellow leaders have a passionate commitment to securing the very best provision for the pupils of Oaks Primary Academy. You have a clear vision, which is built on a comprehensive understanding of your pupils and your community. Initiatives to promote improvement are well researched and ambitious. They are sharply focused on what your pupils need to be happy, successful learners. You monitor pupils' progress carefully and regularly, together with other leaders and governors. This helps to ensure that any necessary changes to provision are made quickly. Morale is high and standards are rising rapidly. Pupils thrive in the hardworking environment you have created. They enjoy coming to school and are well equipped for the next stages of their education and beyond.

Governors are highly effective partners in school improvement. They are skilled and well informed. They supplement the information they receive from staff by regular visits to see things for themselves. This helps them to hold leaders to account

effectively, providing both support and challenge. Governors share the very high aspirations modelled by leaders across the school.

Pupils and parents value the positive environment throughout the school, which focuses on pupils' learning. Pupils value the productive and supportive relationships they have with their teachers. They relish the regular challenges that stretch their learning and thinking. They told me, 'Our teachers push us to the furthest limit, but not so much that you have a hard time.' Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy the opportunities that they have to be part of it, for example by leading assemblies or applying for a range of school responsibilities. Parents recognise the improvements that you and the trust have made. One parent summed up the views of many in saying, 'It's getting better and better.'

You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is effective because teachers have strong questioning skills, which they use to extend pupils in their thinking, or to establish if they need support. Staff and pupils build strong relationships, based on good-humoured mutual respect. As a result, pupils engage happily and confidently in their learning. You have addressed the previous inspection issues. Pupils' attendance has risen steadily and is currently above national averages.

Standards are rising rapidly. This is reflected both in the books of current pupils and in the provisional results of national assessments for Years 2 and 6 this year. More pupils attain the expected standards for their age than national proportions. By the time pupils reach Year 6, more pupils attain the higher standards in reading and writing than proportions of pupils nationally. However, writing outcomes are hampered by weaknesses in pupils' spelling.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Processes and systems for recruitment are clear and follow appropriate guidelines and documentation. Detailed risk assessments help ensure that pupils are safe and their needs are met throughout all aspects of school life, including on school trips.

Child protection is at the heart of the school. Concerns are reported, recorded and acted on in a timely fashion. Because you know your pupils well, any signs that things are not as they should be are quickly identified and acted on. Staff and governors are trained well in safeguarding and know the key factors that may put pupils at risk. All staff and parents who completed the surveys, and those who spoke to me, felt pupils were safe at school. This view was echoed by the pupils, who told me that they felt safe, and trust adults to keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely together at the provision for the most able pupils across the school. In the early years, provision is very well matched to

children's needs. Highly skilled staff quickly forge strong relationships with children and their families. This means that their interests and needs are identified early. Staff ensure that these are reflected in the stimulating activities and engaging environment that they provide for children. As a result, children, including the most able, make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points. In the provisional 2018 assessments more children reached a good level of development than proportions of children nationally. In writing and mathematics a higher proportion of children exceeded this than seen in other schools.

- Currently, the most able pupils are making rapid progress from their starting points across subjects and year groups throughout the school. Teachers are skilled in asking questions and planning tasks which extend pupils' thinking. As a result, pupils attain well. In the provisional 2018 national assessments, at the end of Year 6, more pupils attained the higher standards in reading and writing than proportions seen nationally.
- All pupils, including the most able, benefit from a myriad of opportunities across the curriculum for them to connect their learning and demonstrate their understanding. For example, pupils learning about global issues wrote poetry about plastic waste on beaches and expressed their ideas through design. A pupil eloquently explained to me why she had created an image of the world as a melting scoop of ice-cream on a cone. Pupils are proud of their work and keen to demonstrate their well-developed understanding of complex issues. In upper key stage 2, pupils regularly use dictionaries and thesauruses to check and improve their work. A pupil explained to me how this process, 'helps to increase my vocabulary'. However, in other year groups, pupils are less meticulous about spelling choices, which are sometimes haphazard.
- We also looked together at the effectiveness of teaching in key stage 1. Highly effective teaching ensures that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. Standards are rising rapidly. In the provisional end-of-Year-2 national assessments, more pupils attained the expected standards for their age than proportions seen nationally. The books of current pupils indicate that these improvements are embedded across the key stage, and that pupils are making strong progress from their starting points.
- Effective subject leadership has helped to ensure that improvements in English and mathematics have raised standards across the school. For example, handwriting has improved as the result of a recent focus. Regular monitoring, which includes meetings with pupils, ensures that improvements are sustained. As a result, pupils attain well and are suitably prepared for the next stages of their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' spelling skills are consistently developed across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Leigh Academies 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

Deborah Gordon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met regularly together. I also met with members of the trust and governing body and with staff. I reviewed documentation including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Together, we visited classes across the school. In lessons, I observed pupils' learning, looked at their books, heard them read and spoke to pupils about their work. I had a meeting with pupils to gather their views of the school. I took into account the views of parents I met on the playground, and considered 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text responses. I also analysed 25 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and four responses to the pupil survey.