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Mrs Jackie Sparrow
Head of School
Oakwood Primary Academy
Pendeen Crescent
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Dear Mrs Sparrow

Short inspection of Oakwood Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2019, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, you have played a very important role in the school. You have provided vital continuity and care to the school community. You have also embraced change and challenge. Joining the Discovery Multi Academy Trust has strengthened the leadership of the school. Together with leaders from the trust, you have developed a team approach to school improvement. This has led to higher quality teaching and learning and increased monitoring and challenge. At the same time, you have maintained the caring and inclusive approach of the school. Pupils say that they feel supported by the kind staff at Oakwood. Many parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted survey are very happy with the school and would recommend it to others.

Over time, pupils make good progress. Many children join the Reception classes with low starting points. They get off to a good start and are well prepared for Year 1. Good progress continues, so that most pupils attain the expected level at the end of Year 6 and are well prepared for secondary school. The school's data, work in books and observations show that current pupils develop English and mathematical skills strongly. Pupils work and play harmoniously together. They behave well in classrooms. Learning is celebrated in the school. Pupils are prepared to take risks in their learning. As one pupil said, 'If I get it wrong, people will help me sort it out'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils recognise the good support they receive from the staff at the school. They are clear that, although pupils 'fall out' from time to time, there is little bullying in the school. They are confident that any concerns about things would be sorted out by adults. The vast majority of parents who replied to the Ofsted survey and to the school survey agree that their children are safe.

The staff work hard to know their families and community. Staff help families at the earliest opportunity. The school employs a family support worker who helps families and pupils if they have difficulties. Practical help often remedies issues such as absence from school. The school has clear and effective processes to record and monitor concerns. These are regularly reviewed. Effective work with other agencies supports the most complex cases.

There are clear policies for safeguarding pupils. The arrangements for staff recruitment, vetting and training are suitable and up to date. The trust commissioned a detailed audit of safeguarding which confirmed the school's effective work. The school has responded to the recommendations for improvement.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry was to examine the actions leaders took to improve outcomes in the 2018 national assessments and to examine whether these actions continue to be effective so that current pupils attain well. Following results in 2017, leaders recognised that progress across the school was not consistent. Too many pupils moved on to Year 6 without the necessary skills and with gaps in their knowledge. Leaders therefore examined practice in detail and strengthened teaching and assessment in all year groups, particularly focusing on basic skills. Leaders ensured that monitoring was more effective in identifying pupils at risk of underachievement and that intervention was quickly put in place. Teachers emphasised the importance of pupils developing resilience in their work.
- The school's data and work in books show that progress is now more consistent. Pupils are better prepared for the challenge of different year groups. Teachers have to spend less time revisiting content or remedying gaps in pupils' knowledge. The teaching of reading, for example, has been improved so that pupils have a wider experience of genre and texts. Teachers carefully build up vocabulary and key skills of comprehension, including inference and deduction. In some classes, work has still to be done to ensure that all teaching is of the same high quality. On occasions, progress in lessons is weaker as activities are not well matched to the pupils' prior learning or teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils enough. Middle leaders are very reflective and open to ideas of how to improve things more. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable local advisory board carries out very close monitoring to ensure that the quality of education remains good.

- The second line of enquiry was to ensure that children in early years make the best progress they can. Published data for the last three years shows that the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is below the national average.
- It is very clear that the school has strengthened assessment processes. The early years leader has enhanced her detailed knowledge of children and tracks them more effectively in comparison with national expectations. Staff plan activities that are closely matched to children's developmental level and interests. They identify quickly those children who need extra support or might have special needs. Staff have strengthened links with parents and carers so they can help ensure children have the skills that will help them in school.
- It is clear that the Reception classes are preparing children well for the next step of their education. Through carefully structured, adult-led and child-led activities, children are engaged and learning effectively. Children learn to attend, play and work together. They develop early reading and number skills as well as motor and self-help skills. They become confident.
- The third line of enquiry explored how are leaders ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged and make the best progress they can. Fewer pupils than nationally, including those who are disadvantaged, attain greater depth in national assessments. Leaders have recognised this issue in the school development plan.
- Staff have strengthened teaching and assessment overall. Monitoring shows that the most able pupils are making progress over time. Work to strengthen resilience means that pupils are more prepared to be challenged. Teachers work hard in lessons to encourage pupils to do more or develop their own work further.
- Observations and work in books show that there is still more to be done to ensure that the most able pupils are making the best progress they can. Activities are not always well matched so that pupils are challenged sufficiently. Pupils are not always clear about the expectations so that they can deepen their learning. They do not always challenge themselves to do their best.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the high-quality teaching and learning evident in most classrooms are consistent throughout the school
- activities and approaches provided for the most able pupils always challenge them to do their very best.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local advisory board, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Discovery Multi Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other leaders, the local advisory board and the chief executive officer. I spoke with the chair of trustees by telephone. I spoke with a representative sample of pupils and with other pupils informally. I made observations of learning in classes and looked at examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised documentation from the school on a range of matters, including safeguarding. I took account of 18 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey Parent View and free-text comments from parents.