

3 December 2018

Mrs Ann Clark  
Headteacher  
Oakhurst Community First School  
Shaftesbury Road  
West Moors  
Ferndown  
Dorset  
BH22 0DY

Dear Mrs Clark

### **Short inspection of Oakhurst Community First School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 2018 with Tracy Hannon, HMI, 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 October 2011.

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.**

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have coped with some difficult circumstances and the school continues to go through some turbulent times. You are supported well by the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Heath Academy Trust, of which the school has been a member since 2015. Together, you have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, your strategic planning is not detailed enough. Equally, you have not monitored progress precisely enough against the desired outcomes to ensure that actions are having an impact. As a result, pupils' progress is not improving rapidly.

Pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment for most of their time in school. They enjoy the extensive grounds for sporting activities. Inside, you put pupils' work on display and celebrate pupils' efforts, which inspires many to do better. You have maintained the reputation for care and welfare in the school. This has resulted in increased numbers of pupils with complex needs attending the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive good support from skilful teaching assistants.

The majority of parents and carers say that their children are happy and safe at the school. They watch their children skip contentedly through the doors in the

morning. However, a few parents shared concerns with the inspectors. They feel that communication and responses about issues raised arrive late or not at all. Although you provide regular information and are on duty every morning, parents want you to respond more personally when an issue is raised. Inspectors were confident in the suitability of actions that you have taken. However, parents feel that there have not been enough face-to-face meetings to share the outcomes of actions taken.

Helping parents to support their children with work at home was an area for improvement at the last inspection, although you were not the headteacher then. You have provided many useful tips on the website and have held workshops for parents to attend. You are keen to work with parents and have an open-door policy.

Another area on which to work from the last inspection was to ensure that boys paid as much attention as girls when learning in lessons. There is no difference between boys' and girls' ability to concentrate, but there is variability dependent on the quality of teaching. Too often, pupils are withdrawn from classes to work with another adult. In the main, this is not successful. Sometimes, the adults lack the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure that every pupils' needs are met. At other times, the same pupils are withdrawn, which means that they are missing too much learning time with their classmates.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and trust leaders have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are secure. With the support of the trust, you have put fire doors throughout the building recently to comply with new regulations. Staff are trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of radicalisation and extremism. Checks on the recruitment of staff comply with statutory guidelines. However, some aspects of recording and analysing are not sharp enough, such as the descriptions of incidents and the actions taken. You have acted appropriately whenever issues with pupils and staff occur, including the involvement of agencies and the designated safeguarding officer of the local authority.

### **Inspection findings**

- We discussed the work that is done to improve pupils' understanding of phonics, as results in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 are below the national average. You introduced a new scheme in September 2018 to remedy this, but currently, teaching is variable. Where teaching is strong, pupils are provided with support and challenge to test their learning and make good progress. As a result, reading and writing are improving. However, where teaching is weaker, there is an over-reliance on the resources. You are reviewing the use of the withdrawal groups as they are not effective, especially when there are high numbers of pupils within a group. You and your leaders are supporting some teachers and teaching assistants to adapt work according to the needs of the pupils. It is too soon to see the impact of this. In Reception, some children are not sounding out the letters and blends of letters accurately and, sometimes,

this is left unchallenged. Expectations of writing are not high enough, so too few children are writing effectively by the end of Reception Year and ready for Year 1.

- Next, we looked at pupils' writing, as attainment in tests at the end of key stage 1 has been below the national average for the past two years. You have identified that spelling is an issue. This was one of the main reasons for introducing the new phonics scheme, to help pupils spell correctly. However, this is only partially successful because of the newness of its application. Equally, spelling is not the only issue for pupils' weak writing. You have made sure that pupils are taught grammar and punctuation correctly, that is appropriate to their ages. When we looked at pupils' work, we could see that pupils are creative and imaginative and keen to do well. However, we saw, at the same time, that some teachers are not checking pupils' use of basic skills routinely, nor pointing out errors when they occur. We agreed that the expectations of some teachers are too low, so the quality of writing, including the presentation of writing, dips.
- The third area that we looked at was the teaching of mathematics, as attainment has been below the national average for the last three years. The trust's external challenge partner identified that some teachers lacked confidence in the higher expectations of the curriculum introduced in 2014. To compensate for this, the previous headteacher introduced a new way of working in mathematics in January 2017. Despite training, teaching is still too variable. This results in some of the pupils with lower ability struggling to understand simple calculations. You know that some teachers are not planning carefully enough for their needs. Too many pupils in Year 4 do not know the multiplication tables and this lack of knowledge hampers their progress. Equally, the most able are fluent in calculation, but do not have as many opportunities to challenge themselves in complex reasoning and problem solving. Although you have introduced additional work to challenge the most able, too often teachers are not providing this. In the work of the Reception children, we saw that too frequently, expectations are too low. We noticed that children who can count beyond 10, add single digits and perform other, more complex work with numbers were often not being stretched to do more. When this occurs, the progress of some most-able children stalls, and they become disaffected.
- Finally, we looked at the work you have done to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils. This has been a successful piece of work for you as, with the support of the local authority, you have reduced the number of families involved to a manageable number. You are determined to continue with this until all these pupils attend regularly.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised, so that teachers do not accept work that is not of a high standard

- pupils' progress increases rapidly, so that by the end of key stage 1 and Reception, pupils' achievement reflects their potential and is at least in line with national expectations in phonics, mathematics and writing
- the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with challenge to deepen their thinking, write at a greater depth and reason more proficiently in mathematics
- a focus on improving the attendance of the minority of pupils who have poor attendance is maintained.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with you, and the CEO and the chair of the multi-academy trust. We spoke formally with a group of pupils. We visited lessons for all classes in the school jointly with you and the CEO. We looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books and considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. We considered 35 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 31 comments written by parents, plus the eight responses from pupils and 22 responses from staff to the Ofsted online survey.