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Mrs Sue Bridges  
Executive Headteacher  
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Wensley Street  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Bridges

### **Short inspection of Owler Brook Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 2018 with Karine Hendley, Her Majesty's 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 December 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Your leadership is very strong. You are determined to provide all the pupils in the school with high-quality teaching so that they are better equipped for the next stage of their education. You have worked with other leaders in school to carry out thorough self-evaluation and have identified five priorities for improvement for the current academic year. Together, you have taken action to address these priorities and are carefully checking progress against termly milestones.

Leaders have taken appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Improvements have been made in teaching and learning. Pupils, including the most able, are given work which is pitched to provide the right level of challenge in most lessons. Pupils are given effective advice to help them to improve their work. Progress over key stage 2 has been at least average in reading, writing and mathematics for three years. The rate of progress for all groups of pupils has increased since the last inspection. Leaders' analysis of data shows that all groups of pupils have made at least expected progress over this term. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 remained below the national average in 2018 in reading, writing and mathematics.

You are especially good at what the local authority representatives call 'grow your own'. You support new teachers through initial teacher training and give more experienced staff opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Middle leaders have a key role to play in improving teaching and learning. They regularly work alongside senior leaders to carry out work scrutiny and lesson observation. They then use their findings to give teachers appropriate support and challenge, to help them to make improvements in their teaching.

Staff say that they are proud to work at the school and feel valued. They value the opportunities that they have for professional development, including the work that they do with other schools.

Governors are passionate about their role. They have a sound understanding of the challenges that the school faces in striving to raise the attainment for all pupils. They use reports from school leaders, published data and visits to school to inform their decisions, and to help them to provide leaders with effective support and challenge. For example, they carefully analyse the school's use of pupil premium funding to make sure that it has maximum impact on the pupils it is designed to support.

Pastoral support for pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders are aware of the challenges faced by some pupils and have strategies in place to support them. For example, pupils are given activities which help them to develop their cooperation skills.

Parents and carers speak positively about the work of the school. They say that their children enjoy coming to school and learning. The majority of parents are confident that their children are making good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They praise the school for the work it does to bring all communities together.

Pupils could explain how they are taught to be tolerant and to show respect for others. One pupil said that they feel 'lucky to mix with different cultures and religions'. They can talk about the different topics that they have studied and the places that they have visited to enrich their learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding leads, and all other staff, are well trained. They receive regular updates, which help to ensure that safeguarding remains at the forefront of everyone's mind. Record-keeping is detailed and well maintained. When necessary, appropriate actions are taken in a timely manner. Support for vulnerable families is strong.

Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after in school. They value the support that the school gives to its pupils and their families. They have no concerns about poor behaviour or bullying. One parent was keen to point

out that the school is 'a haven of tranquillity' for her and her children.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there are many adults to 'look out for them'. They can talk about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and understand the importance of keeping passwords secure. They understand the potential dangers that strangers may present.

## **Inspection findings**

- The proportion of pupils in Year 2 reaching the expected standard in reading has improved but has remained below the national average for three years. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was above the national average in 2017, but below in 2018. The school could show that a recently introduced approach to teaching reading is being used well by staff. Pupils in most year groups now have opportunities to develop skills in predicting and inferring. They are expected to use evidence from the text to back up their answers. Work on supporting pupils to extend their understanding of a wider range of vocabulary is effective.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below the national average for three years. In phonics lessons, teachers take opportunities to explain that some sounds can be made with different groups of letters. Activities are chosen well to keep pupils interested and engaged. However, leaders know that phonics teaching needs to be strengthened. Current checking is not used systematically enough to ensure that activities are always well matched to pupils. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to sound out and blend words. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read are not always given books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- The curriculum is designed to cover the national curriculum through a series of year-group topics. Teachers make links between topics and set learning in contexts which are meaningful to pupils. The school aims to give every pupil a broad range of experiences which include regular educational visits. Pupils of all ages and abilities have opportunities to write for different purposes across the curriculum. This gives pupils lots of chances to apply their knowledge and skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling in a range of subjects. This is done with varying degrees of accuracy.
- Leaders are keen to ensure that the development of mathematical understanding is supported with the use of concrete apparatus and pictures before pupils move on to working abstractly. Staff use this approach effectively, most of the time. Adult explanations are clear, and strategies are well taught. For example, pupils are taught to use their knowledge of number bonds to support them to add several single-digit numbers. Most teachers use assessment well in lessons to help them to give bespoke support to individuals and groups. However, this is not as effective in some classes. Pupils think that work is appropriately challenging, saying that it is 'a bit hard'. Quality support is given to hearing-impaired pupils to enable them to learn alongside their peers.
- Leaders work hard to improve attendance. They are fully aware of the challenges

they face and are honest in their evaluations of the strategies that they have put in place. Leaders make sure that absence is thoroughly and carefully followed up through first-day phone calls, home visits and sometimes prosecution. Some pupils act as 'Attendance Ambassadors' and there are many incentives in place to promote good attendance. However, absence and persistent absence are above the national average.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is improved by:
  - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to observe and practise sounding out and blending
  - assessing pupils' phonics knowledge more systematically so that teaching is more closely matched to the needs of pupils
  - ensuring that books are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge in the early stages of learning to read
- rates of absence and persistent absence continue to reduce
- the use of assessment during lessons in reading and mathematics becomes even more effective across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors made visits to lessons and looked at work in books with English and mathematics leaders. An inspector met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair, and two representatives from the local authority.

Inspectors took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They talked to several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day.

Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons and took account of the nine responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. An inspector also listened to pupils read.

Inspectors talked formally with groups of staff and took account of the 27 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, governing body minutes, school assessment information, attendance documentation and safeguarding documentation.