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Mrs C Slater  
Oak Tree Primary School  
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Cheadle  
Cheshire  
SK8 5HH

Dear Mrs Slater

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oak Tree Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

Leaders should take further action to:

- accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils
- further develop the role of middle leaders so that their strengths are shared and their impact on pupils' outcomes increases.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the associate headteacher, deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I met with eight members of the governing body and four middle leaders. I met with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with a group of eight Year 6 pupils to gain their views of the school. You and the associate

headteacher accompanied me on a tour of classrooms to observe pupils at work. I looked at pupils' workbooks and the displays of work around the school. I evaluated the school improvement plan, records relating to pupils' achievement and your checks on the quality of teaching. I also looked at the minutes from governing body meetings. I considered the school's most recent pupil performance information as well as the external reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium grant.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, there has been instability in staffing and governance. In addition, some teachers have moved year groups so their strengths are best utilised in improving pupils' outcomes.

## **Main findings**

You very quickly introduced essential processes and procedures in order for you, your senior leaders and governors to check on progress towards raising the school's performance to good. You all know the strengths of the school and take action to remedy the weaknesses. Leaders and governors have galvanized staff and the raised morale is evident in every classroom. The staff team now works cohesively with the best interests of pupils at heart. This is also reflected in the governing body which is having a significant, positive impact on raising standards.

You, your staff and governors responded decisively to the findings from the last inspection. You explained the inspection outcome to parents and reassured them that strong action would be taken to move the school to good as soon as possible. You have maintained the respect of the majority of parents, who are supportive of your efforts. The parents I spoke to said that you communicate well and that their children are happy to attend Oak Tree. They also recognise the new procedures such as the initiative to improve attendance and comment positively on this.

Together with governors and the local authority, you swiftly produced an action plan to tackle the weaknesses found at the previous inspection. Staff and governors showed their determination to make Oak Tree a good school and improve outcomes for all pupils. Your relentless focus on teaching, learning and assessment is paying off. Across the school, work in lessons, pupils' books and pupil performance information all show that pupils are making stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Lessons are now more challenging. Expectations are high and your checks on pupils' progress allow staff to drill down from year group and class information to individual pupils' needs. During lessons, teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and use this information effectively to move pupils' learning on. Pupils are engaged in their learning and one comment from pupils noted, 'Every day is fun but there is lots of learning.'

Action taken so far has enabled rapid improvements in the quality of leadership and management. The developing middle leaders are a strength of the school. They have carried out checks on their subjects through visiting classrooms, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils. Consequently, they have a better understanding of the achievement of pupils in their subjects and what actions need to be taken to improve this. They are ready to make a much stronger contribution to improvement and are enthusiastic about carrying this out. You recognise that the best practice in middle leadership now needs to be shared with other subject leaders.

As a consequence of the external review of governance, governors are in a much stronger position to hold leaders to account for the smooth and effective leadership of the school. Governors hold professional discussions about the roles and responsibilities of governors so that each member knows what is expected of them. Governors use their action plan to guide their work for the good of the pupils. Minutes of governing body meetings show that leaders provide detailed information and that governors challenge this information with perceptive questions. In this way, the governing body keeps a keen eye on the decisions that senior leaders take and checks that the best interests of pupils always come first.

As a result of the pupil premium review, you check the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged carefully. You now ensure that they receive the support they need to overcome any barriers to learning. The link governor with responsibility for pupil premium carries out frequent checks to make sure the funding is used well. Governors are, therefore, much clearer about the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and the areas of weakness that leaders are tackling. There has been more impact through distributing responsibility for this group to subject leaders and as a result disadvantaged pupils now perform better across the curriculum. However, you acknowledge that more can be done to accelerate the progress of this group.

You have used expertise from the local teaching school alongside the strong practice within the school to improve provision in all key stages. Teachers have visited other schools to observe excellent classroom practice. You know the strengths of each teacher and take action to support them so they improve their practice at a rapid pace. You check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through lesson observations, scrutinising pupils' workbooks, holding pupil progress meetings and by checking on progress information. These methods enable you to challenge weaker classroom practice and provide training activities which are pertinent to the needs of your staff. Teachers appreciate these training opportunities, which result in improved confidence and raised expectations for themselves and their pupils. Teachers are reflective about what works and what needs to improve in order for pupils to make good progress. You also provide bespoke training for teaching assistants, ensuring consistency, for example, in the teaching of phonics throughout the school. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well mapped out with clear targets linked to pupils' achievement.

You have taken swift and successful action to make sure that children in the early years do not fall behind. Outcomes are to be celebrated. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in 2017 increased significantly. This is because there is now a consistent, whole-team approach to children's learning across the early years. Provision is effective both indoors and outside: staff have created stimulating and attractive classrooms. Resources, indoors and outside, are arranged so that children can access them readily and so extend their interests. Each area has opportunities for children to write and to record their thinking. Staff are involved in activities and effectively structure their talk with children so that they can extend learning. As a result, children's books and assessments show that they are making progress and are being challenged.

Pupils' outcomes at the end of other key stages also showed improvement in 2017. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards in reading and mathematics increased. Those reaching above the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics also improved from 2016. At key stage 2, pupils' outcomes overall improved in reading, writing and mathematics. This was also the case for the number of pupils who achieved standards above those expected for their age. Pupils also performed better in both the grammar and punctuation test and the science test. However, although there has been improvement this year, attainment for disadvantaged pupils at all key stages remains below that of other pupils nationally. You know that there is still work to be done to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make more rapid progress.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided effective support by commissioning training for governors and by organising support from the local teaching school. This has helped middle leaders to develop the skills they need to carry out their roles effectively. You have used this external support well to make sure that the school receives guidance and training in the priority areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**