

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jill Quine
Head of School
Othery Village School
Othery
Bridgwater
Somerset
TA7 0PX

Dear Mrs Quine

Short inspection of Othery Village School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

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.**

There have been significant changes to leadership arrangements recently. You took up your post as head of school last year. Governors are determined and ambitious for the school. They understand the school's strengths, and work to ensure that good support is in place to make improvements to weaker areas. The school is in a federation with another small village school, Middlezoy Primary, and is also now part of The Levels Academy Trust. The recently appointed chief education officer of the trust works closely with you and has helped to develop robust improvement plans based on accurate evaluations. Improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are being made; some are quite new.

The school remains at the heart of the small community that it serves, aiming to 'Work in partnership, putting children first'. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and are very positive about the education provided for their children, a typical comment being 'A warm, welcoming school that cares for every pupil'. Arrangements for working across the federation of the two small village schools are carefully thought out, and pupils move seamlessly between the two. Before-school breakfast and reading clubs provide early activities that parents appreciate.

You have continued to work on the key priorities that were identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' books show that the improvements made to the teaching and

assessment of mathematics are helping pupils to develop their skills. Teachers are increasingly confident to plan learning activities that require pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve more complex problems.

Through these activities, pupils can practise their skills and deepen their understanding of the mathematical concepts. There is evidence in workbooks that pupils are able to work out more complex mathematical problems as a result of this better teaching. You are aware that as these improvements to the teaching of mathematics are new, pupils, particularly the most able, could achieve even more.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils feel safe at the school. The strong, caring culture, supported by appropriate training in safeguarding, ensures that they are safe. Recruitment arrangements are thorough and well organised. Staff are vigilant and aware of how to notice and report any signs of concern. They are kept informed of any changes to safeguarding guidance throughout the year through regular updates.

Inspection findings

- We looked closely during the day at how well pupils' progress is checked to ensure that pupils are making the progress they should. The trust has introduced a new system to track pupils' assessment across the school. You are starting to use assessment information provided by teachers to check the progress that pupils make, and you discuss this with teachers.
- However, these assessments are not carefully checked to ensure that they are accurate. Teachers have not consistently been held to account for the progress that pupils make. Although there are signs that improvements are starting to be made, there has not been a robust approach to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- As a result, too few pupils reach the expected standards for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to the lack of challenge, not enough of the most able pupils reach higher standards in these areas.
- Until recently, teachers have had little guidance and support to ensure that they are able to make accurate assessments or to ensure that expectations are high enough. As a result, teaching does not consistently match the learning needs of pupils. Work can be too easy. Therefore, at times, pupils are not motivated to produce high-quality work.
- The trust has plans to provide more opportunities for teachers to share their work and the assessments they make, but this work has not yet started.
- We also explored how well pupils are developing their writing across the school. Teachers ensure that pupils write often and in a range of subjects. However, pupils' books show that too often their writing skills do not improve rapidly enough.
- Teachers do not consistently identify the key skills that would help to improve

pupils' writing. Therefore, they do not provide the teaching needed to improve these writing skills. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- expectations rise across the school so that pupils make better progress and reach at least the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics
- teachers provide sufficient challenge in reading, writing and mathematics to ensure that the most able pupils reach the higher standards that they are capable of
- staff are supported to improve the quality of their work by being provided with high-quality professional development linked to the priorities for improvement
- teachers are supported to make accurate assessments about pupils' work by having more frequent opportunities to share the assessments they make with staff in other schools
- teachers use the assessment information they have to more closely match the learning needs of pupils
- they maintain the more rigorous approach to holding teachers to account for the progress that pupils make.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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 Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had meetings with you, the chief executive officer from The Levels Academy Trust and the chair of the governing body. I spoke to pupils informally during the day and to the school improvement partner on the telephone. The views of parents were taken into account through conversations at the start of the day as well as the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I observed learning across all classes, together with you. This included a visit to see learning taking place for older pupils at Middlezoy Primary. A range of pupils' workbooks were scrutinised. A number of school documents, including the school's information about pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and other school documents related to safeguarding, were examined. Recruitment processes were checked. A meeting was held with the school's designated lead for safeguarding.