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Miss W Chant
Headteacher
Milford Infants' School
Glenthorne Avenue
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Dear Miss Chant

Short inspection of Milford Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on Thursday 10 March 2016, 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 school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Pupils and staff agree that Milford Infants' School is a happy place and feel that everybody is cared for and looked after well. Teaching staff appreciate the strong relationships they have with each other and consider the school to have a real 'team spirit'.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover of governors. New governors have eagerly sought training for their role and brought with them a range of professional expertise. They are very supportive of the school and make regular, focused visits which are closely linked to priorities highlighted in the school's development plan. Findings are systematically recorded, fed back to other governors and used to inform future plans.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the promotion of pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures. Links with schools in China and in France have helped the pupils gain a wider understanding of different ways of life in other countries. In a recent survey carried out by the school, nearly all parents felt that their children are taught to respect people from different backgrounds and religions.

You and your deputy headteacher work together well and use your individual expertise effectively to support and develop the work of the school. You have an

extremely strong knowledge of the local community which underpins your commitment to the care and welfare of every pupil who attends Milford. Your deputy headteacher uses the information gathered on pupils' attainment to check the progress that individuals and groups are making. This is used with teachers to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning.

You are very ably supported by other senior and middle leaders who play an important part in ensuring that teaching is of a consistently high standard throughout the school. Regular checks on lesson plans and the contents of pupils' work books help them to gain a good understanding of the strengths in the teaching and the areas that require development. Systems adopted to assess how well pupils are doing when compared to age-appropriate expectations are well understood by all teaching staff.

Most impressive is the excellent progress that pupils make with their writing skills. Since the previous inspection, writing standards in the Year 2 national tests have been consistently significantly above average. A scrutiny of current pupils' work shows that they are very confident writers who write with purpose and meaning. This is because you and your staff provide them with exciting opportunities, such as visits out of school to environmental centres, which ignite their imagination and make them eager to write.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have created a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. You all get to know the families of children who attend Milford Infants' School very well and a close eye is kept on every pupil, especially any whose circumstances make them vulnerable. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Policies and procedures are kept up to date and strictly adhered to. Staff are well trained and any concerns are always immediately followed up by you or your deputy headteacher in your roles as designated child protection officers. You have built up very close professional relationships with external agencies, such as social services, and staff make good use of specialist help and advice.

You and your governors understand how to recruit safely and staff are carefully vetted prior to employment. Governors are focused on ensuring that the school building is a safe place to be and regularly carry out rigorous health and safety checks. Incident logs are carefully checked to make sure that there are no recurring risks. For example, you and your governors noted that there had been an increase in the number of pupils who were getting wood splinters in their fingers. Immediate action was then taken to check and treat all the wooden equipment for safety. You, your staff and governors have all attended training on the government's approach to the prevention of extremism.

Parents report that they feel their children are kept safe in school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection explained that they felt safe and knew who they could approach if they were worried or concerned. They have an appropriate understanding of e-safety for their age.

Inspection findings

- Although standards in the 2015 reading tests at the end of Year 2 declined from significantly above average to broadly average, inspection evidence confirms that currently pupils are making consistently good or better progress in their reading as they move through the school. Inconsistencies in teaching reading have been ironed out. Letters and sounds are taught systematically and teachers ensure that pupils know how to decode words they do not know. Pupils enjoy reading and speak enthusiastically about story time and their weekly timetabled slot to use the library.
- Standards in the 2015 Year 2 mathematics tests also declined from significantly above average to just above the national average. Your actions to improve the consistency of teaching are ensuring that pupils now make good and sometimes better progress in mathematics. Your senior and middle leaders explained to me how the adoption of the new levels of challenge in lessons is helping pupils to extend their thinking and deepen their learning. This is having a particularly positive impact on the most-able pupils, who are responding very well to higher levels of challenge.
- You use extra government funding well to support those pupils who are disadvantaged. The achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils in your school and others is closing year on year. This is as a consequence of well-targeted support and additional opportunities, such as extra-curricular activities, which support pupils' learning and accelerate the progress they make.
- Most classrooms are well-organised and interesting places to learn. Reception classes have exciting role play areas, such as castles, where children develop not only their personal, social, and emotional skills but also their communication skills when they pretend to be 'princesses or knights'. Nevertheless, you and your leadership team have accurately identified the need to improve the outdoor learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Currently, it does not fully develop the children's speaking, reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- During our visit to all classes we saw pupils fully engaged in lessons and taking responsibility for their learning. They explained to me that they enjoy coming to school and are delighted when they are given the 'golden bag' to take good work home to show their parents. Pupils behave well and work thoughtfully alongside each other. Lunchtime sessions are sociable occasions where they eat sensibly with their friends and demonstrate good table manners. Pupils are respectful of each other and take turns to listen and respond to adults. The head boy and girl take their responsibilities very seriously and know that they are representing the school when they show visitors around. Pupils have a clear understanding of the behaviour that is expected of them and are proud of the team points they receive. Opportunities to elect school councillors, or to decide which class will take responsibility for decorating a reading space in the library, are enabling pupils to develop an age-appropriate understanding of how to live in a democratic society.

- During the past academic year some groups of pupils did not attend school regularly. This included a proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. You have full knowledge of these individual pupils and work very closely with the families concerned. It is clear from the case studies we discussed that you are not afraid to challenge parents who fail to send their children to school regularly and on time. Consequently, the attendance of these groups has improved since last year.
- Governors have recently reorganised their committee structure and this is helping meetings to be more timely and effective. They carefully check that pupils' progress targets are being met and finances are being used appropriately, such as pupil premium and sports funding. However, deploying senior leaders in key governor roles, such as the chairperson of the teaching and learning committee and the named governor for special educational needs provision, does not ensure that the work of the school can be challenged robustly and objectively.
- Parents responded positively to the online Parent View questionnaire. One parent explained that it is 'a very caring and supportive school' and considered all staff to be 'very dedicated'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements already planned for the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor learning area are implemented rapidly to fully develop children's speaking, reading, writing and mathematical skills
- key roles within the governing body offer rigorous and objective challenge to the work of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher. We discussed the recent improvements made in the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged and the steps you are taking to tackle persistent absence. We discussed safeguarding procedures and you shared some examples of the work you have done with vulnerable pupils. I considered the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and information about the progress pupils were making. I held discussions with your senior leaders who have responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage, key stage 1 and provision for special educational needs. I also met with a group of

middle leaders and six governors, which included a brief meeting with the chair of the governing body. I had a discussion with a senior officer from the local authority. You and I visited all the classes together and looked at pupils' books. I joined pupils when they were having their lunch and met with a group informally. I looked at responses made by pupils, staff, and parents to the online inspection questionnaires. I also considered the comments made by a parent who contacted Ofsted during the inspection.