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Dear Mrs Reeves

Short inspection of Monkleigh Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Monkleigh Primary School is a happy, welcoming school that fosters a love of learning. Parents typically describe the school as 'a lovely school with a caring and friendly staff'.

You have developed a staff team that shares your drive to empower pupils to become resilient learners. Corridors and classrooms are characterised by beaming smiles from diligent pupils. This is because teachers and other staff make learning engaging. Your staff team has ensured that pupils respect themselves, others, their work and the school. Work in books is impeccably presented.

Since the previous inspection, governors have taken on the management of the pre-school. In 2013, the pre-school provision was judged to be outstanding. Information on children's attainment clearly shows the positive impact on children's development. Children are increasingly achieving higher outcomes. In 2014, no child exceeded expectations in reading, writing or mathematics at the end of the Reception Year. In 2016, approximately half the class were assessed as exceeding the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Current assessments reflect a similar positive picture.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that you seek out

and share best practice. You and the governing body have high expectations. You invest heavily in staff training, within the school and in seeking out appropriate external training. Leaders value the training they attend. They cascade information gleaned to the rest of the staff team and make timely checks to ensure that policies are followed through. This work has resulted in a consistency of approach across the school and has raised standards achieved. For example, you had previously identified writing as a weaker aspect of the school's work. It is now a strength. Pupils write equally well, and often with individual flair, across all areas of the curriculum. Mathematics has been a more recent focus for school improvement and is less well developed. However, effective leadership in mathematics has seen significant improvements in teachers' planning and assessment of mathematics. Consequently, you have successfully halted the previous decline in pupils' progress.

Your partnership work with three other local schools has been instrumental in developing strong and effective assessment procedures in the light of curriculum changes. You and your team have developed an effective means of ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to get better. You provide the team with dynamic leadership. You use a highly analytical approach to check how well pupils are achieving and you demonstrate an unwavering commitment to improvement. You and your team are not complacent. You work closely with other schools to moderate your judgements and are continually seeking ways to enhance your work.

The previous inspection report also highlighted the need to ensure that indoor and outdoor learning environments support pupils' learning more effectively. Your creative use of space has ensured that there is a seamless provision indoors and out. Young children have a safe and purposeful outdoor area. Equipment is accessible. This supports children's independence skills. The systems in place encourage children to take responsibility for managing the high-quality learning environment. You and your governing body have been creative in finding solutions for the lack of space. The purchase of a yurt has further enhanced the provision for pre-school. Children explore and learn in a stimulating, bright space, free from harm. All learning spaces in the school are well organised, demonstrating the care and pride that staff and pupils take in the school. Attractive wall displays are used effectively to help support pupils' learning and celebrate their successes.

The governing body knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are able to articulate how leaders have tackled previous areas for development. Governors knowledgeably discuss the current priorities that feature in the school development plan. They are forward thinking and are rightly always looking ahead to secure the long-term future of the school in the best interests of the pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in the school.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and comply with the most recent government guidelines. Staff are recruited safely and are well

trained to spot and act on signs of risk or harm. Any concerns are swiftly followed up and reported to the appropriate authority. Leaders are meticulous in carrying out the appropriate risk assessments for school trips and visits out to ensure that pupils are safe at all times.

Pupils enjoy school and attend well. Their overall attendance has improved to be in line with the national average. Similarly, the attendance of pupils supported through the pupil premium has also improved to be in line with the national average. Pupils are insistent that there is no bullying in school and say 'we all get on, just like a family'. They are confident that teachers sort out any problems quickly. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in saying that they felt their children were safe and well cared for at Monkleigh.

Inspection findings

- All staff who responded to the online questionnaire said that they were proud to be a member of staff in the school. Pivotal to school improvement is the relentless focus you have in ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations for their pupils. Regular and robust performance management and interrogation of progress information drive school improvement.
- A particular strength of the school is the way pupils are inspired to think deeply about their learning. Pupils develop resilience because of the way they are encouraged to approach problems. There are no mistakes, just learning opportunities. Teachers make their expectations clear. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They thrive on responsibility. Older pupils in particular are eager to challenge themselves and each other to test out if their learning is secure.
- There is a rich culture of reading in the school. It is a central part of the life of the school. Particular focus is placed on helping those who need to catch up. A targeted programme of work has enabled pupils to make good progress in their reading. Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been higher than the national average for the last two years.
- Pupils read widely and enjoy talking about their favourite authors. They spoke passionately about the recent visit from an author to open their library. Teachers encourage a love of reading. Standards in reading remain high, particularly by the end of Year 6. The most able readers continue to achieve a high standard, as do an increasing number of middle-ability pupils. In recent years, few pupils have achieved the highest standard in reading by the end of Year 2. However, this represents good progress from pupils' lower starting points. Standards in the early years foundation stage are continuing to improve. As a result, more pupils are on track to achieve higher standards as they go through the school.
- Historically, progress in mathematics has been weaker than in reading and writing. Fewer pupils achieved the high standard in 2016 at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. Your mathematics leaders have worked tirelessly to tackle this. Last year brought about significant improvements in the way that children were able to explain their thinking in mathematics. Work in books demonstrates pupils' improved skills in problem solving. This year you have rightly focused on helping

pupils to understand the most efficient methods for calculations. Work in books and the school's accurate assessment information both show that well-matched intervention is closing the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. However, some pupils' progress is limited because they are not able to recall number facts accurately or rapidly. This slows down their learning.

- Leaders and governors make effective use of the additional pupil premium funding. The few disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress from their starting points across all subjects. In particular, lower-ability disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress. This is because of the carefully targeted support they receive. Historically, fewer middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils have made accelerated progress to achieve the highest standard. This trend is changing. The school's improved assessment procedures, closely entwined with the change in curriculum expectations, are supporting teachers' identification and support for middle-ability pupils so that they too make accelerated progress.
- Parents and pupils appreciate that the school provides a broad range of after-school clubs. More than half of the school participate in at least one after-school club, with many taking part in two or more. The use of sports funding to purchase equipment and attend a range of competitions, events and sporting venues has raised the profile of competitive sport in the school and has increased pupils' love of sport.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 2 recall and apply their knowledge of mathematical facts rapidly and accurately in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school. We visited lessons together, looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke to the pupils about their learning. I heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 with varying abilities read. Additionally, I looked at books, external reports and information about pupils' attainment and progress with

the mathematics leader. I spoke with pupils to discuss their work. A small group of pupils gave me a tour and shared their views of the school. I spoke with three representatives from the governing body. I also took into account the 26 survey responses from Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents, as well as the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and 37 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.

In particular, this short inspection focused on:

- How effective is leadership in mathematics to support high-quality teaching, learning and assessment?
- How effective are leaders in ensuring that the most able pupils receive the challenge and support they need to achieve a high standard, particularly for key stage 1 pupils in reading?
- How effectively are leaders deploying additional funding so that disadvantaged pupils of all abilities make accelerated progress?
- How are leaders ensuring that the teaching of phonics and reading in key stage 1 is supporting pupils to achieve good standards in reading?
- How effective are senior leaders and governors in creating a strong safeguarding culture in the school?