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Miss Helen Mellody
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Helen Mellody

Short inspection of Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2017, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Governors are committed to improving the school's performance even further and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They hold you and other leaders to account rigorously and play a critical role in monitoring the school's performance.

Langtree is a very welcoming school. Pupils behave well and greatly enjoy school. They are polite and courteous around the school and say they feel safe. Pupils flourish socially because they have excellent relationships with staff. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education because of the nurture and care provided for them. Parents are rightfully proud of their school. One parent emphasised this by saying, 'Langtree is an amazing school that makes everyone feel welcome. My child has thrived since being there.'

You have enabled the school to improve since the previous inspection through determined and strong leadership. This is especially evident in the development of literacy skills in the early years foundation stage, which has been a focus for improvement. You have worked tirelessly to provide more opportunities for children to practise and apply their literacy skills, including when learning outside. Most notably, the rich outdoor learning environment provides pupils with a safe and stimulating place to learn and explore. Teachers use innovative approaches and give pupils regular opportunities to write for a specific purpose. Consequently, children

display high levels of interest and are motivated to write. For example, during our learning walk we observed children in the Reception class painting outside while practising writing letters.

As headteacher, you set high aspirations and you are strongly supported by staff and governors. In last year's national assessments, pupils at the end of Year 6 attained less well than the national average in writing. Leaders and governors challenged teachers to improve their teaching rapidly. Teachers know the pupils well and give them precise advice on how to improve their writing. Current Year 6 pupils are working at expected standards for their age. However, leaders acknowledge that work is not always well matched to pupils' ability, which is limiting pupils, especially the most able, from writing at greater depth.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, are determined to keep pupils safe. You make sure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is regular and comprehensive, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. You and your governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe using digital technology through well-researched and regular activities in the curriculum, including assemblies.

Staff take pride in knowing each pupil and their family well. Consequently, they can arrange the best support when it is needed. The welcoming and caring atmosphere created, supported by up-to-date training for staff, ensures that your school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils and parents are confident that issues regarding behaviour are followed up. Pupils commented on how they trust the staff and can confide in them through class 'worry boxes'. Members of staff are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and fully understand more complex issues, such as radicalisation. Parents are positive about the school's work within the community and the difference it has made to pupils' lives. Overall, safeguarding arrangements are of high quality.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, a key line of enquiry focused on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the rapid development of pupils' reading and writing and mathematics skills.
- Children in the early years get off to a strong start, which continues through key stage 1. Effective teaching results in pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although children's skills on entry into the Reception class vary from year to year, they consistently gain ground, particularly in their social and emotional development. The strong focus on developing early language and communication skills is equipping children with the understanding and foundations needed for their future success.
- In key stage 2, teachers are particularly skilled in developing pupils'

understanding through discussion and debate. In mathematics, pupils solve problems, justify their answers and find things out for themselves. Occasionally though, teachers expect too little of their pupils. Sometimes, activities do not interest the higher-attaining pupils, and this prevents them from reaching higher levels of attainment, especially in writing.

- My second key line of enquiry focused on the impact of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning across the school, especially the attention given to analysing the progress of boys.
- Middle leaders are improving their understanding of the revised expectations of the national tests through collaboration with local schools. However, teacher assessment at the end of key stage 1 is not consistently accurate. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils make stronger progress than is reported in published information.
- You and your governors rightly explored why monitoring had not previously identified that the 2016 standards achieved by boys in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 were lower than those achieved by girls. Most boys are now making accelerated progress in reading and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. However, boys' progress in writing in key stage 2 is uneven, resulting in too few boys working at higher levels beyond the expected standard.
- We agreed that my third key line of enquiry would focus on leaders' evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that pupils apply their literacy and mathematical skills and gain knowledge about other cultures and religions in the world.
- The school's religious education curriculum provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities linked to world religions. Pupils learn extensively about other faiths, including Christianity, through a 'philosophy for learning' approach. The pupils told me how much they enjoyed learning about Buddhism and Judaism. They particularly enjoyed exploring the motivation behind religious leaders' beliefs and actions using thought-provoking questions such as, 'who was to blame for Jesus' death?'
- Pupils learn how to debate and develop their literacy skills through experiencing other cultures. For example, pupils enjoyed a visit from a parent who taught them about Japanese culture, including learning nursery rhymes and finding out about important festivals and celebrations. Pupils learn about life in contrasting localities in Britain through a well-developed partnership with a school in Essex. Consequently, pupils have well a developed understanding of social, moral and cultural issues.
- My final key line of enquiry focused on the impact of your recent work to improve attendance, especially for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- You are rigorous in your record-keeping of attendance. Leaders have amended the school attendance policy to more robustly challenge pupil absence and lateness. This allows you to take swift action to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, attendance is improving quickly and is in line with the national average. The attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent is

rising quickly.

- The higher than national rate of persistent absenteeism last year was identified as the result of a small number of pupils with medical and health needs. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils who miss learning activities through illness are not educationally disadvantaged because equality is rigorously promoted in this inclusive school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should raise standards in key stage 2 by ensuring that:

- middle leaders rigorously check the progress of specific groups to be able to respond rapidly to pupils' on-going needs
- consistently high expectations of the most able pupils, especially in writing.

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

Susan Costello
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, two members of staff and a group of pupils from across the school to discuss their work and gain their views of what it is like to be a pupil at Langtree Community School. I spoke with three representatives from the governing body. I accompanied you on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I considered the 19 survey results from Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, together with responses to discussions with pupils and staff. I evaluated the robustness of your single central record and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.