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Rachel Pattison
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Dear Mrs Pattison

Short inspection of Marpool Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have worked skilfully in recent years to rebuild a new staff team and to strengthen leadership at all levels. Staff appreciate the way you have developed their teaching and leadership expertise and their morale is high. These actions have led to improvements in pupils' achievements, both personally and academically.

As a united team, staff and governors sustain a strong commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity. You and your staff promote a caring atmosphere where values such as respect and mutual understanding underpin the day-to-day life of the school. You provide a broad and well-balanced curriculum that encourages pupils to think, explore and learn well together. Consequently, they make good progress during their time in the school.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to make use of best practice in teaching to ensure that pupils are challenged and inspired to learn. Staff now work in teams, sharing expertise and presenting pupils with a wide range of highly stimulating learning experiences. As a result, pupils have grown in confidence and take an active part in their learning.

Pupils and their parents express particular appreciation of the exciting learning experiences provided by the school. They typically say that investigations in the school's 'fabulous woodland and wildlife areas' strongly promote the pupils' enjoyment and success in learning.

The previous inspection also identified the need to increase opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. You have strengthened pupils' speaking and listening skills. As a result, pupils' work in books shows their good progress in organising their ideas and writing more confidently and expressively.

Pupils' improved communication skills have also enabled them to talk and deepen their thinking in mathematics. You recognise that the pupils' ability to explain their work needs further embedding to ensure that all pupils, especially those who find learning difficult, make rapid progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, managers and staff sustain a positive safeguarding culture across the school. They are fully supported by governors and administrative staff in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are well documented and thoroughly and frequently checked. As a team, leaders and managers complete all the necessary checks on teachers and other staff to determine their suitability to work with children. They make sure that health and safety procedures, including those relating to fire safety and security, are known and implemented effectively by all staff.

Senior and middle leaders work very closely with external agencies to monitor and support vulnerable pupils. They ensure that concerns are fully investigated and that referrals are made in full accordance with statutory procedures.

Staff know the pupils well and have been trained in how to keep pupils safe. Consequently, you and your colleagues are particularly alert to, and supportive of, an increasing number of child carers who are required to look after parents or siblings at home.

Staff work and communicate closely with parents. Parents who responded to the questionnaire overwhelmingly expressed the view that the school keeps their children safe. Parents value the support you offer. For example, parents make full use of the school's newly created community cafe to seek friendships and address their concerns.

Pupils readily said that they feel very safe in school because, 'We have lots of friends and teachers look after us well.' The pupils felt that bullying was very rare, but that if it did happen teachers would 'sort it out straight away'.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to examine leaders' efforts to strengthen the development of the children's language, literacy and mathematical skills. This is because some children have not achieved expected levels of skill in these aspects across early years and key stage 1.
- You and your early years leader rightly identify that the large majority of children begin school with low skills in these aspects for their age. Leaders and teachers across early years and key stage 1 are dealing with this effectively by sustaining

a strong emphasis on developing these skills. In particular, in recent terms they have strengthened the way they work together to develop children's speaking and listening skills.

- Teachers and teaching assistants in the early years classes model clear speech during regular 'time for talk' sessions. They are promoting children's good progress by teaching them to listen carefully and repeat new words accurately when replying to questions. For example, children in the nursery class extended their vocabulary and communication skills effectively when enthusiastically describing the chickens in the school's grounds.
- Teachers in key stage 1 classes sustain the effective emphasis on speaking skills to extend the breadth of children's vocabulary and their ability to write meaningfully and expressively. As a result, pupils willingly share ideas with each other and respond meaningfully to adults' prompting and questioning. For example, they share tools and talk enthusiastically about how to use them to cut wood for the outdoor 'Fire Pit'.
- Pupils' good progress in developing their speaking skills boosts their confidence in communicating ideas and enables them to learn well together. Teachers make good use of these skills and encourage pupils to talk about and explain their ideas in mathematics and this deepens their understanding.
- My second line of enquiry was to examine the work of leaders and teachers in quickening the progress of some groups of pupils. This included lower-ability pupils in mathematics, and boys who lack confidence in writing through key stage 2.
- Increasingly, teachers across the school have significantly strengthened pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. This brought about much-improved outcomes in this year's end of key stage 2 national assessments in mathematics. You are continuing the successful emphasis on encouraging pupils to explain their thinking, and this is deepening their understanding.
- Teachers have improved the way they use assessment information to plan work that challenges pupils at the right level. Currently, teaching staff are providing additional support for pupils, especially some lower-ability pupils, whose lack of confidence inhibits their ability to tackle mathematical problems. This is accelerating their progress, but, as you recognise, needs to be sustained to ensure that they develop the levels of skill expected for their age.
- As in other parts of the school, teachers in key stage 2 classes promote pupils' interest in writing successfully. Teachers present stimulating learning experiences which capture pupils' imagination and extend their vocabulary. They also motivate pupils through thought-provoking texts, for example about the Second World War. All pupils, including boys with limited confidence in writing, are responding with interest and show good expression in their written work. You acknowledge, though, that a small proportion of pupils, more often boys who find learning difficult, have weak handwriting and spelling skills, impeding their ability to write fluently and make faster progress.
- Finally I examined the steps taken by leaders to reduce persistent absence. Most pupils attend well and overall attendance is broadly average. However, the

attendance of a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and some who speak English as an additional language has been lower than for other pupils over recent years. You and your staff work closely with parents and the education welfare officer. Your rigour in tackling persistent absenteeism, especially in checking reasons for absence, is improving attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- sustain the focus on deepening pupils' mathematical understanding, especially for those pupils who lack confidence in tackling problems
- further develop the basic handwriting and spelling skills of those pupils, especially boys, who are not yet demonstrating expected writing skills for their age.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local 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

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the other staff with leadership responsibilities. I met with members of the governing body and held telephone discussions with a representative of the local authority and a school improvement colleague. I visited classrooms with you and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and with other pupils and support staff during the morning break. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 95 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 53 additional parents' written comments. I also took note of 25 responses to the staff questionnaire and responses from 46 pupils to their questionnaire.