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Mrs Leigh Ford
Headteacher
Marlborough Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ford

Short inspection of Marlborough Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 last inspection.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate because you have a thorough understanding of the standards reached and progress made by all pupils. You, together with your senior and middle leaders, understand the school's strengths and areas for development fully.

Despite many changes in staffing and a move into a new school building, you have ensured that the standard of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. Staff appraisal systems are strong. Leaders match professional development opportunities to the needs of each member of staff carefully. This was an area for development at the time of the last inspection.

Teachers and teaching assistants work hard to make sure that pupils acquire the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics from an early age. Children in early years are taught to be independent and to help each other to succeed from the outset. You, the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or difficulties and the teachers make effective provision for those pupils who find learning difficult.

Your decision to provide in-school counsellors for those pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties is paying dividends. There are now far fewer incidents of

poor behaviour than there were in previous years. Pupils and their families appreciate this valuable resource.

Pupils thrive in school because of the care and attention they receive. They support local and national charities willingly. Pupils at Marlborough wear their uniform with pride.

Your recent decision to widen the school's Nursery provision to include two-year-olds is a testament to your desire to provide the best opportunities for the children in the local community. Parents appreciate the efforts that you and your staff make on behalf of their children. One commented that her children have, 'come on in leaps and bounds' since starting at Marlborough Primary School.

Because you know your school so well, you are clear about what needs to improve. You are aware that more pupils need to reach the highest standards of attainment. While disadvantaged pupils make strong progress, you are correct to want more of them to reach and exceed the expected standard for their age. You also know that, although pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2 has strengthened, it is not yet as high as progress in English. Your team has already started work to address these priorities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's recruitment procedures are strong. Records are fully compliant with government requirements.

You and the deputy headteacher, as designated safeguarding leaders, attend training updates each term. You both ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of how to keep children safe in education.

Pupils' attendance is beginning to improve but remains just below the national average for primary schools. This is one of the school's key priorities for improvement.

Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online. They do not give out any personal details to strangers. Your pupils feel safe and secure in school. They told me that they really like the help, support and care that they receive from adults in school. Pupils have noticed that behaviour has improved over time. However, they would like the number of name-calling incidents to reduce even further.

Inspection findings

- Regular attendance is celebrated in school. Pupils enjoy receiving certificates for 100% attendance. They understand that they learn more and make the best progress when they attend school every day. However, whole-school attendance remains below the national average for primary schools.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points overall in reading, writing and mathematics. However, not enough of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, reach the highest standards at the end of each key stage. Teachers are addressing this key priority for school improvement well. For example, the work in

current pupils' books shows that they have to grapple hard with mathematical problems to succeed.

- Senior leaders have placed an increased emphasis on mathematics this year after improving standards in writing successfully last year. The subject leader for mathematics is leading this initiative effectively. Pupils enjoy accessing the new multiplication tables software online. They are beginning to recall multiplication and division facts more rapidly. Leaders have taken assertive action to meet the needs of a small number of pupils with poor basic mathematical skills in key stage 2. These pupils are beginning to make better progress because of the high-quality, closely targeted teaching they receive.
- Governors have a thorough knowledge of the impact of the government's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils make good progress from their starting points but do not reach the standards reached by other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This is a key priority for development in the school's plans for further improvement.
- The school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led well. Pupils' needs are met well. They make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school more often now than they did last year. The number who are persistently absent from school is reducing.
- Children, sometimes from very low starting points, make rapid progress in early years. An increasing proportion reach a good level of development over time. The early years pupil premium is spent judiciously to ensure that disadvantaged children make outstanding progress to reach standards just below those of non-disadvantaged children nationally. The environment for learning is bright, welcoming and safe, both indoors and outdoors. Teachers have high expectations of the children in their care. Children are taught to be independent learners. For example, all of the children butter their own toast at snack time as a matter of course. They hold and use their knives appropriately, with just a little butter reaching the handle instead of the blade. Teachers make learning real and meaningful. During the inspection, the children made soup and lanterns from pumpkins they had grown themselves in the early years allotment.
- Teaching and learning in phonics are strong. Teachers and teaching assistants take great care to ensure that pupils say sounds correctly. This enables pupils to develop early reading and writing skills rapidly. Pupils read books with just the right level of challenge for their ability. They have to concentrate hard to read the words on the pages and understand their meaning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance continues to improve
- a greater proportion of the school's most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standards in English and mathematics

- pupils make as much progress in mathematics in key stage 2 as they do in English
- disadvantaged pupils make even more progress from their individual starting points
- pupils have an increased awareness of the need to respect each other's individual differences.

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

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader, two subject leaders and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I examined information about pupils' achievement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school's most recent surveys of staff, parent and pupil views. In addition, I held discussions with a representative from Sunderland local authority and the school's external school improvement partner from Gateshead local authority. I considered 15 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey, 13 responses from pupils and 18 parental responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. You and I visited classes in all key stages to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked the progress made by pupils in their workbooks, talked formally to a group of six pupils and talked more informally to pupils in lessons and at breaktime about their learning. Three pupils from Year 1 read with me.