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Mrs Elizabeth Astbury
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Astbury

Short inspection of Medlar-with-Wesham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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, and is ensuring that the school continues to move forwards. Leaders have been particularly successful in making improvements to the school buildings and grounds, creating a bright and welcoming learning environment that staff and pupils are rightly proud of.

Pupils are articulate, well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. They behave extremely well around school and on the playground, and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. This was summed up accurately by one pupil, who simply said: 'Everyone gets on really well together.' Pupils display extremely good attitudes to learning. They listen attentively to their teachers, settle quickly to the tasks set for them and work hard. Pupils are happy that leaders take their views into account, for example when selecting new play equipment, and members of the school council are proud of the work that they do raising funds for local charities.

Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a broad and well-balanced curriculum that allows them to develop their skills and knowledge across a wide range of areas. Teachers plan educational visits so that they enhance pupils' learning, such as visiting the Roman site at Ribchester as part of their history work. Pupils are encouraged to carry out independent research, to use their English skills to write recounts and describe experiments in science, and to use maps accurately. Pupils benefit from the particular skills and knowledge of specialist teachers who lead

learning in physical education, computing and music. The school also runs a wide range of extra-curricular clubs which give pupils further chances to take part in new and exciting activities, including drama, sports and cookery.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified by the previous inspection. Outcomes in mathematics over time confirm that any previous weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics have been remedied. For the last two years the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been above average. You have made sure that effective support is in place for pupils who speak English as an additional language. You have made good use of local authority services, but have also appointed a bilingual member of staff who works particularly effectively in supporting children in early years who arrive at school with limited knowledge of English.

There is no sense of complacency though, and you and your fellow leaders have also secured important improvements in other areas. For example, the teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is very effective and standards have risen so that an above-average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in both Year 1 and Year 2. You have coped well with some unexpected and sensitive staffing issues, and have also successfully developed the skills and confidence of other school leaders, thereby ensuring that there is good capacity within the school to make further improvements.

The leadership team's evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate, and you have plans to address any weaknesses that your careful tracking of performance data has identified. Leaders, including governors, also have a clear and ambitious vision for the school's future, making sure that it continues to meet the needs of its families, the church and the growing local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. These checks are recorded meticulously. Staff and governors receive regular training covering different aspects of safeguarding. As a result, staff know exactly what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. Leaders ensure that support is provided for vulnerable pupils and their families, either from the school's own learning mentor or external agencies.

Pupils are confident that they can talk to an adult in school if they are worried about anything. They understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using the internet or crossing the road. Pupils say that bullying in their school is very rare, and they are certain that staff will deal with any incidents of bullying or misbehaviour that do occur. The great majority of parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agreed that their children were safe and behaviour was good at the school.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these considered how effectively leaders were taking action to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Results in the end-of-key-stage tests in 2016 and 2017 suggested that disadvantaged pupils may not have been performing as consistently well as either their peers in school or other pupils nationally.
- School leaders track individual pupils' progress and attainment in detail, and were able to show that the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils had made at least good progress from their different starting points last year. The picture for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is the same, and work in pupils' books confirms that disadvantaged pupils are making typically good progress. Leaders were also able to show how the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was affected by a range of other factors, such as a large number joining the school during key stage 2. Where pupils did join the school late, or where they were identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, leaders ensured that they received appropriate support to speed up their progress.
- The second line of enquiry looked at how well the most able pupils in the school are achieving in writing. A smaller proportion of pupils than nationally were working at greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 1 in 2016 and 2017. Similarly, scores in the key stage 2 grammar, punctuation and spelling tests were also below average in 2017 at the higher level.
- Pupils' written work shows that they typically learn to write effectively in a range of styles, and the most able pupils make adventurous vocabulary choices to enhance the impact of their writing. However, it also shows that too many pupils, including the most able, make simple errors in spelling and in their use of punctuation which are not consistently challenged by teachers. These errors detract from the overall quality of their written work and prevent the most able pupils from reaching the very highest standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders are aware that there are weaknesses in pupils' spelling across the school. For example, they recognise that although pupils display a very good knowledge of phonics in key stage 1, many pupils are less comfortable when spelling common irregular words. The leader for English has introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' spelling but it is too early to judge the full impact that these are having.
- The final focus for the inspection was on the organisation and quality of the school's curriculum. Pupils confirmed that they enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects, and picked out pieces of work from geography, history and science that they were particularly proud of and had enjoyed tackling. They particularly appreciated the opportunities that they are given to take part in practical activities, such as scientific experiments or looking at historical evidence. They also said that they learned a lot during special 'focus weeks' that teachers organised, covering topics such as healthy living.
- Work in pupils' books confirmed that the curriculum at Medlar-with-Wesham is wide ranging. However, while there is plenty of breadth in the curriculum, in

some year groups teachers do not provide pupils, particularly the most able, with the challenge they need in their work to fully extend and deepen their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have suitably high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve and consistently set them work that stretches and challenges them
- teachers ensure that pupils' accuracy in spelling and punctuation is at least in line with the expectations for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, other school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also met a group of staff and a group of pupils. I considered 27 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments. I visited classes in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, and I looked at examples of pupils' work from a range of subjects and year groups. I also looked at documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.