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Mrs Joanne Clensy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clensy

Short inspection of Malmesbury 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has developed its skills further through effective partnerships with other local schools. You said that this has developed the expertise of the leadership team and helped leaders build consistency in teaching and learning. Results in national assessments, at the end of 2017, suggest that standards have continued to rise at the end of key stages 1 and 2. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors found that there was more work to do to improve pupils' speaking skills. The work I saw during the inspection suggests that the actions you have taken to address this has had a positive impact. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastic to discuss their learning.

You are rightly proud of the school's work to promote the development of the curriculum so that pupils develop their understanding in music, art and physical education. This has helped to raise pupils' aspirations and develop their language skills. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics is now above the national average.

You recognise that there was a slight fall in the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. Leaders ensure that they allocate experienced staff to support pupils whose phonics skills are below age-related standards. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress.

You have focused on developing the teaching of mathematics over the last year to develop pupils' arithmetic skills. Leaders have sought to develop pupils' reasoning skills so that their achievement in mathematics can be as high as it is in English. You check pupils' progress regularly. Senior leaders provide additional support to selected pupils.

Governors have a strong understanding of the school and set high expectations. They have a 'no excuses' attitude and understand the school's progress to date. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that pupils are well looked after and kept safe at the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks are thorough. Leaders check the training that staff receive and ensure that these reflect the latest guidance.

Leaders have benefited from using a new system to record and follow up any concerns raised by staff. This has increased the vigilance of staff further and ensured that leaders have clear oversight of any concerns raised.

Governors and leaders have met with 'online ambassadors' from Years 5 and 6 to gain a deeper understanding about pupils' understanding of online safety. Consequently, pupils, and parents and carers, have received guidance about the potential dangers of online gaming and how to stay safe when using social media sites. Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of these potential risks and speak articulately about how to keep themselves safe online.

You have introduced the United Nations' rights respecting charter to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils have chosen to learn about the right to be safe and the right to not be discriminated against. Pupils talk enthusiastically about these rights.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would focus on two areas where you believed the school's strengths could be seen. The first was the support given to pupils in Years 1 and 2 who are working below the age-related expectations in phonics and reading.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils' phonics knowledge and reading abilities. You have ensured that experienced staff provide additional support to pupils who have low prior attainment.
- Pupils work with knowledgeable adults who provide consistent support. Adults encourage pupils to practise previously learned letter sounds and skilfully introduce new ones. Pupils respond well and make strong progress. Some are able to recognise technical terms such as 'digraphs' and use these in their discussions.

- Pupils practise writing words using the rules they have learned. Staff check pupils' accuracy and praise their efforts. Pupils typically enjoy their learning and develop confidence in writing.
- However, opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge of phonics skills through reading books are limited. This is because pupils are given texts that contain phonics rules they have not yet learned. Pupils find these books too difficult to read. This limits their fluency and expressive reading. As a result, these pupils lack confidence and do not understand what they are reading.
- The second focus for the inspection was the quality of teaching in mathematics. This was because leaders have identified pupils' progress in mathematics as a whole-school priority for improvement.
- You have made sure that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics in the school. Pupils have a good grasp of calculation skills and make strong progress. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss the strategies they use to solve calculation questions and pupils respond confidently. Pupils listen attentively to one another and share their own ideas.
- Lower-attaining pupils are supported effectively with well-selected resources that aid their understanding. For example, pupils used black-eyed beans to solve division calculations. However, when teachers move on to complex tasks that do not build on pupils' previous learning, some lower-attaining pupils struggle to complete tasks, particularly when teachers do not clarify pupils' misconceptions.
- Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their work in order to build on their mathematical reasoning skills. However, too often, challenging problem-solving work is given at the end of lessons. As a result, pupils are not given sufficient time to learn how to tackle demanding tasks in depth. Many pupils said that they enjoyed problem-solving tasks but often did not have time to learn how to do these.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The quality of teaching and learning improves further by:
 - providing the lower-attaining pupils with books matched to their abilities, and opportunities to develop their fluency and expression in reading
 - ensuring that pupils develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills 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 Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, we agreed two lines of enquiry to exemplify your self-evaluation of the school's performance. During the day, I visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' books accompanied by senior leaders. I carried out a review of the school's documentation, including the school's improvement plans and safeguarding information. I held meetings with senior leaders and governors, and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Finally, I considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys including 36 responses from parents, 36 responses from staff members and 65 responses from pupils.