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Mrs Debbie Priest  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Priest

### **Short inspection of Milton Hall Primary School and Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018 with Sarah Ginzler-Maher, Ofsted Inspector, 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 December 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You know the school well and lead it with energy and a clear sense of purpose. The school's distinctive ethos and strong values underpin your day-to-day work and help to identify the school's long-term priorities. You work effectively with a group of like-minded and well-trained senior leaders, including governors who are equally passionate about getting the best for pupils. Since the previous inspection, academic progress has been consistently high, especially so in 2016 and 2017. You and your staff are making a positive contribution to the local community. You should be commended for the work that is taking place to ensure that pupils have positive life choices when they leave the school. There is a healthy balance between compassion for the pupils and ambition for what they can each achieve in the future.

The quality of education is consistently strong across the school. It enables pupils who arrive at the school, including those who speak English as an additional language, to settle quickly and begin making good progress from the start. Teachers check what pupils know, understand and can do as part of their ongoing

dialogue with pupils. They use assessment information effectively to plan the right steps to build pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities also achieve well.

You have ensured that the quality of teaching at Milton Hall is of a consistently high standard. You and your staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve no matter their prior attainment or barriers to learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they deliver lessons at a brisk pace that engages the vast majority of pupils. As a result, behaviour is extremely positive across the school and many pupils are making exceptional progress.

Pupils feel at home in the school because you have nurtured a caring, supportive and welcoming culture. Pupils want to do their best and this shows in their behaviour and the way they treat each other. Pupils are friendly, cheerful and loyal to their school.

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online survey Parent View are also satisfied with different aspects of the school's work, with many commenting that they strongly agree with the statements asked. Comments such as 'My child loves coming to Milton Hall,' and 'My child is thriving in her first year. Her teachers are brilliant at what they do and I couldn't ask for a better start to education for my daughter,' were typical of the many positive comments offered by parents.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have recently implemented initiatives to allow subject leaders within the foundation subjects to monitor the academic progress being made within their subjects. This is still relatively new and the impact on assessment and progress in the foundation subjects has yet to be fully seen. As a result, subject leaders are not fully monitoring their areas of responsibilities to ensure that the provision is strong.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe throughout the whole school community. Pupils trust and respect you and the other adults who care for them and say that they feel valued and safe. You take great care to identify when pupils need additional help. You work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that pupils and families receive the timely help and effective support they need. Records show the effectiveness and positive impact of this work.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry, to establish if the school remains good, was to consider how well year group leaders and subject leaders use information about pupils' progress to check the quality of provision within their area of responsibility. I held

meetings with leaders as well as discussing this matter with senior leaders and governors. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. Year group leaders have been appointed and have played a pivotal role in the school's recent academic successes. They work closely with senior leaders and monitor the progress of pupils within their year groups. As a result they have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development within their areas of responsibilities. Year group leaders also work with the staff within their year groups to improve practice. Inspection activities showed that quick intervention by leaders has ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently strong across the school.

- The English and mathematics subject leaders have a thorough understanding of their subjects. They spoke with clarity about how they use a range of monitoring tools to ensure that pupils make high levels of progress throughout the school. They have a comprehensive understanding of how the assessment information produced by teachers shapes leaders' understanding of the provision within their subjects. They use this information to plan staff training as well as make changes to the curriculum. For example, the school recently changed its mathematics programme of work as a result of gathering the views of staff and monitoring pupil outcomes.
- Leaders of the foundation subjects monitor their subjects well and have a good understanding of the impact of their work within their area of responsibilities. However, they are not yet fully aware of the assessment information relating to their subjects and therefore are not yet as effective as their English and mathematics counterparts in monitoring pupils' progress.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how well leaders and managers are ensuring that a greater proportion of pupils attain the higher than expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has correctly placed a high focus on this area and has appointed a member of staff to lead across the school. This has already made a big impact on the progress that the most able pupils are making. Across the school, the vast majority of teachers plan lessons that challenge the most able and require pupils to reason, debate and explain their understanding. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils expertly debated the merits of a book compared to a film version of a story.
- The school ensures its pupils, including the most able, aspire to attend university. They sign pupils up to the 'Children's University' and encourage pupils to attain a child's degree. They run intervention clubs and activities to stretch and challenge pupils such as the Brilliant Club and the 11+ Club. The most able pupils have access to a visiting academic who works with a group of pupils to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills when reading challenging texts in English.
- As a result of the school's focus on raising the attainment of the most able a higher proportion of current pupils are on track to reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. The school's work to raise the percentage of pupils attaining the higher standard at both key stages is to be commended. Pupils regularly start the school with academic levels lower than their peers nationally or having English as an additional language. Due to strong teaching and highly effective support systems, these pupils quickly catch

up with their peers and increasingly a greater proportion are attaining higher standards.

- During the inspection, I also wanted to investigate how well leaders spend the pupil premium grant to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same level of progress as their peers. I looked at a wide variety of work from current pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant and found that progress over time is strong for this group of pupils across the curriculum, particularly so for writing. Teachers provide effective strategies to overcome the barriers to learning faced by many pupils at the school. Governors routinely challenge leaders on the progress of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the pupil premium grant is spent accurately to address the needs of the pupils at the school.
- Over recent years the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been higher than the national figures and significantly higher than their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. This is testament to the exceptional work that the school undertakes to ensure that pupils have the same life opportunities and chances as each other. Indeed, this is seen through the fact that you have been asked by the local authority to lead on a project across the authority in raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- My final line of enquiry centred on the school's work to ensure that the upward trend in outcomes seen in 2017 at key stage 1 and key stage 2 continues into 2018 and beyond. As a result of strong teaching across the school, pupils are receiving an education that is allowing them to fulfil their potential and for many, to exceed their potential.
- Work in pupils' books shows that progress from typically low starting points across the curriculum is extremely positive. Teachers and support staff provide timely and purposeful comments, in line with the schools marking and feedback policy that enable pupils to improve their work and correct misconceptions across the curriculum. Questioning is a strength of the school and is enabling all pupils, especially the most able, to develop key skills and understanding. Teachers and support staff were observed asking questions that probed pupils' thinking and encouraged detailed explanations from pupils. As a result, current pupils are on track to attain and achieve higher than their 2017 peers in both key stages. Inspection activities support the school's view and own assessment information.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics use a range of assessment information to monitor pupil progress within their areas of responsibilities to check the quality of provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Joseph Figg  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you and your senior leadership team, four school governors and a representative from the local authority. We spoke to a group of pupils and individual pupils around the school. Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' learning and conducted several learning walks around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities as well as information from the school's assessment system.

We scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and current progress information. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website.

In addition, I took account of 69 responses to the Parent View online survey and 45 free-text comments as well as 36 responses from school staff to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.