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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Tracey Leganski
Head of School
Membury Primary Academy
Membury
Axminster
Devon
EX13 7AF

Dear Ms Leganski

Short inspection of Membury Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

In September 2015, the school became an academy and joined the Acorn Multi-Academy Trust. Since that time, leaders of this school have worked effectively with their colleagues across the trust to continue to improve the quality of teaching and raise the achievement of pupils. Your appointment as head of school in September 2017, together with changes to leadership and teaching roles, has ensured that the school has continued to improve. This is evident, for example, in the way teachers identify and assess pupils' needs accurately. Teachers are strong role models for pupils. They maintain high expectations of pupils and provide them high-quality care. Pupils, and children in the pre-school, warmly appreciate and follow teachers' guidance. Pupils routinely give of their best and help each other to learn.

All those associated with Membury Primary Academy are proud of its caring community ethos. You and your staff are tireless in sustaining the school's strong commitment to inclusion. The warmth of the welcome and the effective support and opportunity that you provide for pupils lies at the heart of all that you do at the school. Pupils are proud to attend the school. They excel in their personal, social and emotional development.

You and school governors are passionate and committed to your roles; leaders at all levels recognise what is going well and what needs to be better. You receive good

support from the executive headteacher and other academy trust leaders in checking the performance of the school effectively. Together, you provide strong leadership and keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.

Staff know each pupil very well. This enables them to provide the teaching and guidance that pupils need to make good academic progress from their often widely different starting points. All of the parents and carers that responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, stated that they would recommend the school. All the parents that I spoke to and all those who provided additional written messages expressed high appreciation of the work of the school. One parent painted an accurate picture of the school by writing, 'The school really builds community spirit and instils this within the children.'

You recognise that, at times, pupils with high ability have not achieved the higher standards in mathematics and writing of which they were capable. You are also rightly committed to reducing the amount of time a very small number of children are persistently absent, which is currently too high.

Safeguarding is effective.

All those who work or spend time at the school, including the pupils themselves, sustain a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff work diligently to ensure that all pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils report feeling very safe at all times. As one pupil said, 'This is because we know we can trust our teachers.' Pupils of different ages also readily confirmed that they would have no hesitation in talking to other members of staff if they had any worries.

A high proportion of pupils in the school are potentially vulnerable and have a range of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and emotional needs. Your comprehensively documented procedures and records show that you and your staff work conscientiously to support the welfare needs of these and other pupils to good effect. The way pupils of all ages play with and look after each other so amicably and caringly at breaktimes is a joy to see.

School leaders and administrative staff of the school and the trust implement thorough up-to-date procedures to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with pupils. These procedures include appropriate checks of others who spend time in the school, such as voluntary helpers and governors. Parents indicate their full support and unanimous appreciation of the way you so diligently look after their children. As one parent wrote, 'The nurturing and understanding of other people's needs that my children have learned is a skill they will take throughout life.'

Inspection findings

- Most pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points during their time in this school. This includes the large proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and reflects the high-quality individual

help they receive. Staff identify and assess the different needs of all pupils at an early stage. They quickly establish a detailed knowledge of each pupil's academic ability and personal needs. They provide effective programmes of pastoral support and focused teaching to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning that they have. Pupils develop in confidence as well as ability. The strong relationships in school and high levels of trust between adults and pupils, as well as between the pupils themselves, support their good learning. As they move through the school, pupils become committed learners and take pride in giving of their best.

- The school provides consistently strong teaching and a curriculum that sparks pupils' imagination and fires their interest in learning. Stimulating learning activities, including those outdoors, enable pupils to mix with others of their age across the trust to widen and enrich their learning. As a result, almost all pupils reach the levels of skill and understanding expected for their age. This is despite many joining the school after terms have started, or in different years, and with skills below those expected for their age.
- You recognise that the school can build further on this success and help some pupils, especially the most able, achieve even higher standards. This academic year, you have strengthened the focus on deepening pupils' mathematical understanding and extending their ability to write expressively. This is already bearing fruit. Staff are skilled at supporting and prompting pupils in lessons to try their hardest and produce their very best work. Teachers challenge pupils and encourage them to widen their vocabulary and to think more deeply about their writing. For example, pupils in the Years 3 to 6 class ably described features in their narrative writing. Pupils in the Reception and Years 1 and 2 class showed similarly good knowledge and positive attitudes to learning when reciting multiplication facts. Pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to reason more deeply when tackling mathematical problems.
- You use a good range of strategies to encourage good attendance. Almost all families respond well and ensure that their children miss very little school time. You make rigorous checks of pupils' attendance and rates of absence. You send out letters to parents and continue close communication with them if their children's attendance remains a cause for concern. When necessary, you establish similarly rigorous contact with outside agencies to make sure that families receive appropriate support for their particular circumstances. You have rightly identified that the school's overall rate of attendance continues to be adversely affected by a very small number of persistent absentees. You recognise that determined and supportive work with these families is paying dividends but needs to continue so that children do not lose valuable learning time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to challenge the most able pupils in their learning so they make faster progress and attain the higher standards of which they are capable
- they further reduce the persistent absence of a very small number of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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 the executive headteacher of the schools in the trust and consulted with the other school and trust staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with governors of the school and the chair of the directors of the academy trust. I visited classrooms with you and the senior teacher. We collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and listened to you and the senior teacher hearing pupils read and talking to them about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 16 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 16 additional written comments from parents. I also met with two parents and considered a letter from a parent.