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Mr Martyn Lightwood
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Dear Mr Lightwood

Short inspection of Millbrook Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have acted upon the areas identified for improvement, and with positive results. For instance, the quality of mathematics teaching has improved, and pupils regularly apply their mathematical knowledge in different subjects. Subject leadership has strengthened and you are successful at identifying and nurturing staff talent, so that teachers' skills are developed and put to good use. The current senior leadership team, which has grown under your leadership, is capable, energetic, objective and ambitious. This effective leadership ensures that teaching continues to develop and improve.

Your, the governors' and other leaders' evaluations of the school's current performance are well informed and honest. You all acknowledge that, while progress rates are in line with national figures, attainment in reading needs to rise. This is a key feature of your current school development plan, and your team is working hard to make this happen.

Pupils say they enjoy school, especially mathematics, and many take on responsibilities that help the school to run smoothly and safely. Parents and carers who spoke with me and those that responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, also had positive things to say about the school's work. They particularly appreciate the visibility and approachability of staff, the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the attention given to pupils' welfare and safety. Nevertheless, despite these positive views, some families

allow their children to miss too much school without good reason.

The school and its grounds are well kept and many school displays celebrate high-quality work and promote worthwhile messages about respect, safety and treating others fairly. There is a sense of optimistic purpose about the school, which is evident in the calm excitement generated in lessons, pupils' orderly conduct and the friendly, relaxed, yet focused, manner of staff and pupils.

This is a supportive and effective school that has expanded significantly since the previous inspection. It is led well.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are excellent. Every routine and course of action has been well thought through and informed by up-to-date training. The five safeguarding leads make sure that everyone who works in or visits the school knows what to do should a concern about a child's welfare or safety arise. They check on adults' knowledge through regular questionnaires and staff meetings. Around the school building there are numerous signs that remind pupils and adults how to stay safe and what to do if they are worried about anything. The school's records show that when staff have needed to report a concern, they have done so promptly and put children's safety first.

In addition to the work done by adults, pupils also take a lead in safeguarding matters. There is a pupil-led safety squad, made up of two pupils from each year group. These pupils wear bright green sweatshirts so they are easy to spot and pupils can go to them if they are upset, worried or scared. The safety squad helps to sort out minor problems and knows how to report more significant concerns. Governors, too, take their safeguarding duties very seriously and are properly informed and on the ball.

On the playground, supervision arrangements work well and first aid treatment is given quickly when required. Other health and safety matters, such as risk assessments for school trips, site security and storage arrangements for medicines, operate with attentive efficiency.

Inspection findings

- Most children start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. In many cases, children's language and communication skills are limited. In response, the early years provision focuses heavily on developing children's learning behaviours, social skills and language, and with notable success. In addition, the school has started admitting children from the age of two, which is clearly making a positive difference. By the time children reach the end of their Reception Year, the proportion reaching a good level of development is now above the national average and most children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Key stage 1 makes the most of this strong start. Year after year, scores in the

Year 1 phonics screening checks have been above national averages. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were above national averages in both 2016 and 2017.

- In key stage 2, the picture of progress and attainment is more mixed. Overall, progress rates in reading, writing and mathematics have been broadly average in recent years. In 2016, however, mathematics was particularly strong, and in 2016 and 2017, mathematics and writing both presented a stronger picture of attainment than was seen in reading. In both years, reading attainment at the end of Year 6 was below average. Leaders and staff are alert to this and have taken steps to identify the reasons and lift standards higher.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' classwork and their performance in tests has led them to change the way reading is taught. There is now a greater focus on fluency, the development of vocabulary and reading for meaning. In all classes, pupils regularly read aloud to one another and then discuss what they have read and what it means. Wall displays in classrooms, such as 'great thinkers use great words', prompt pupils to extend their vocabulary and understanding of the concepts that sit behind words. Teachers and teaching assistants routinely read to pupils, and authors have come into school to work with different classes. During this inspection, for example, one member of staff injected fun and excitement into a simple story by putting different hats on her head to represent different characters. At the end of the day, a teacher-led story time happened in almost every classroom. Such enthusiasm for reading is infectious. Pupils report that they look forward to 'Flappy Friday', which is a special assembly when those pupils who have read with an adult at home everyday get to flap the pages of their reading records.
- Pupils who continue to struggle with reading receive well-planned support in the school's reading hub. These sessions, often led by the school's special educational needs leader, are calm, purposeful, fun and focused times when pupils are given warm encouragement and ambitious, yet realistic, targets. Indeed, the culture across the school is one of aspiration, and the school's renewed attention to reading is paying off. Pupils in key stage 2 who shared some of their reading with me, read with interest and fluency. Furthermore, the school's own assessment information shows that current pupils are on track to reach higher standards this year. Nevertheless, leaders know that there is still further to go. Consequently, raising standards in reading across key stage 2 remains the number one priority for the school.
- Another key priority is to strengthen the learning partnership with parents. While parents are content with the school's work, you know there is scope to improve home-school links so that parents have a better understanding of how their children learn and how to help them at home. Staff have led workshops, both to explain to parents about aspects of school and to improve adult literacy. You and the governors have plans to build further on this aspect of the school's work.
- Indeed, a very important message to communicate is the link between regular attendance at school and achievement. Currently, some pupils miss too much school without good cause. While the poor winter weather caused some

difficulties and possibly led to an increase in absence due to illness in the autumn and spring terms, this is no excuse for some instances of poor attendance. The school's attendance officer and the school's pastoral and inclusion staff are very much on the case. They work hard to forge constructive links with families and to support and challenge them as needs be. A range of incentives to reward good attendance has brought about some change for the better. For example, the proportion of pupils with 100% attendance has risen over time and, in the spring term of 2018, around 20% of pupils did not miss a day. Even so, finding ways to improve the attendance of regular absentees is an ongoing problem.

- Behaviour at the school is managed well and is usually good. Staff are consistent in their approach and pupils are treated with kind, firm fairness. Some challenging behaviour does flare up from time to time and staff deal with it properly and responsibly. There have been some fixed-term exclusions but the rate has reduced in recent times. In the 12-month period leading up to Easter 2017, for example, 25.5 school days were lost to exclusion. For the equivalent period up to Easter 2018, the loss reduced to 15 days.
- Staff record all incidents of difficult behaviour correctly, and support is put in place to minimise recurrence. Indeed, this inspection found several examples of the school's support resulting in marked and sustained improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading builds successfully on the positive start in early years and key stage 1 so that key stage 2 standards rise
- they work with families to improve the attendance of those pupils who miss too much school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other members of your leadership team and the teaching staff. I also met with three governors and the school's business manager.

I carried out short observations of teaching in different year groups and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and at lunchtime and met with a small group to talk about school life and work. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

I paid particular attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included: pupils' achievement in reading, attendance, safeguarding, and the impact of leadership and management.

By the end of the inspection, there were 16 recent responses on Parent View and seven written comments. I took account of these responses and also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I looked at a number of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records relating to the work of governors and subject leaders, external reports about the school, pupils' records and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.