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Miss Shelagh Thomson
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Dear Miss Thomson

Short inspection of The Merton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, together with governors and with support from the academy trust, are overcoming challenges presented by staff changes and you make good use of staff expertise within the school.

You have restructured the senior leadership team. Together, you effectively evaluate and modify the curriculum to ensure continued improvement. You and school leaders check the quality of teaching and learning regularly. Leaders model good practice and ensure that teaching is consistent, an aspect you have developed well since the previous inspection. You enable staff to share ideas with each other and to benefit from working with teachers from other schools.

There is a strong sense of community in your school. The pupils I spoke to during my visit told me about their roles as librarians, 'Huff and Puff' helpers and school councillors. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and they pride themselves on their contributions. You and your staff expect pupils to work hard. You reward pupils' efforts and celebrate their successes. You expect pupils to adhere to the school's values. Pupils told me about the school's rules and how they are helped to see the consequences of their actions. They said they learn about people of different faiths and backgrounds. They talked about respect for property and other people and said, 'We treat others as we want to be treated.'

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils

write extensively in a range of subjects. You have addressed this well. The work in books shows that pupils not only develop storylines and write imaginatively in English, but also write at length in history, geography and science.

Also at the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils receive enough challenge to reach standards of the highest levels. There is now a whole-school approach to help pupils to work at greater depth in English and mathematics. In the lessons that we visited together we saw pupils putting their reading to good use to draw conclusions from the text. In mathematics, pupils systematically used their knowledge to solve problems and to explain their reasoning. Occasionally, however, the most able pupils spend time on work that they can easily do before they move on to apply and extend their skills more fully.

You acted quickly to improve the teaching of phonics after a dip in Year 1 standards in 2016. The school's information shows that the improvement seen in 2017 has been sustained. Pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to reach above average standards.

You have introduced new ways to teach spelling. You expect the consistent teaching of handwriting and pupils present their work well. Your new approaches to the teaching of mathematics consistently develop pupils' skills and deepen their understanding. As a result of these developments, standards in mathematics are rising.

Your drive to raise standards in reading is paying off. You and your staff have determinedly raised the profile of reading throughout the school. You expect pupils to read regularly and encourage parents' and carers' involvement in their children's reading. Staff introduce varied and interesting books which stimulate pupils' enjoyment. They help pupils to interpret what they read. When I listened to pupils read, all said they like reading and that adults in school help them to improve. Pupils explain plot and character well and know how to retrieve information. As they put it, they like 'to read between the lines'.

One of your main priorities is to minimise any differences in performance between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. You have increased adult support to aid pupils' personal and academic achievements more strongly. You carefully check that any extra help given to pupils who need to catch up is effective. Pupils' progress is speeding up, particularly in mathematics where they frequently consolidate and practise their skills. Disadvantaged pupils now attain more highly than previously in reading, writing and mathematics. However, not all yet make the accelerated progress needed to reach the expected standards by the time they leave the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your designated leaders keep staff informed and updated on how to keep pupils safe. You ensure that they receive regular and relevant training and know what to do if they have any worries over pupils' welfare. The procedures for vetting

adults who work with pupils are robust.

You keep thorough records of any child protection concerns. You maintain effective links with external agencies and take the necessary steps to reach positive outcomes for pupils. You establish good relationships with parents and families in order to deal with any concerns promptly.

You and your staff teach pupils about safety issues such as anti-bullying and e-safety. You use visitors to the school, including the local police force, to provide extra guidance, for example to raise awareness of drugs misuse. Pupils visit outside locations, such as the Warning Zone, to help them to identify risk and deal with unsafe situations.

Pupils said they feel safe and the parents who responded to Parent View agree. When I asked pupils about bullying they said it is not a problem in their school, summed up by the comment, 'Our school won't tolerate it.' Pupils explained the different forms that bullying may take, including when using technology, and they said the guidance they receive from the school helps them to deal with any problems.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' analysis of standards by the end of Year 6 in 2016 and 2017 has led to curriculum improvements and greater consistency in the teaching of English and mathematics. As a result, pupils make strong progress and standards are rising.
- Leaders ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of key reading skills. Teachers set tasks which challenge pupils to think about and make sense of what they read. They link reading and writing activities effectively.
- The school's information and work in books shows that more pupils now achieve the higher levels than previously. Teachers provide tasks to extend pupils' skills and to deepen their understanding, particularly in reading and mathematics. They give the most able pupils extra challenge but, on occasion, this comes too late in lessons to allow pupils to make the best progress.
- Leaders' ongoing evaluation of the effect of the pupil premium spending on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils leads to increasingly effective teaching and support. Recent changes have led to marked improvement in the progress these pupils make. However, not all yet reach the expected standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils learn about places, eras and faiths that are different to their own. They develop an understanding of rules and sanctions, fairness and democracy. They know the importance of showing respect and tolerance, indicating the school's effective promotion of key British values.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make the best possible progress in order to reach the standards expected for their age
- the most able pupils quickly build upon their existing skills in lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and school leaders. We looked at samples of pupils' work and discussed progress information. I also met the chair of the governing body, along with two other governors. I spoke to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. I visited some classes with you to observe the teaching of English and mathematics. I met with a group of pupils and listened to some pupils read. I spoke to pupils about their learning during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during playtime. I analysed the 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 50 written comments submitted by parents. I took account of the 34 responses to the questionnaire completed by staff. I looked at documentation relating to safeguarding and discussed the school's safeguarding procedures. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks. I also looked at the school's development plan and self-evaluation.