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Mr Christopher Hansen
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hansen

Short inspection of Great Malvern Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 February 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

At our initial meeting, you explained that Great Malvern Primary School has undergone considerable changes recently. The school joined the Mercian Education Trust in 2015 and in September 2017 the school's leadership team was restructured. You were appointed as executive headteacher and the post of head of school was created.

Together with the head of school, you have ensured that there is a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and standards. You have established a culture of ambition by setting expectations that are now much more challenging. With the full support of governors, you have ensured that all staff now have high expectations of all pupils.

There is limited evidence that the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed. Prior to your appointment, the quality of teaching had been allowed to decline, leaving pupils with considerable gaps in their knowledge and in their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, standards and progress are now well below the national averages at all key stages.

However, since your appointment, you have identified the correct priorities and put in place a comprehensive school improvement plan. Your evaluation of the school is

an accurate and honest assessment of the current provision. Despite the fact that the impetus to improve only began in September 2017, there are clear signs of impact.

Governors know the school well. They are now holding leaders to account more effectively for the quality of education in the school. Prior to September 2017, governors did not receive the information they needed to be effective in their roles. You have ensured that governors receive detailed information so that they can fulfil their statutory responsibilities more effectively.

Governors recognise that standards at the end of all key stages are currently well below national averages. However, they have confidence in you and the relatively new leadership team to bring about the improvements to teaching that are needed. You are rightly focusing on making sure that teachers use accurate information about pupils' learning to set tasks at the right level of challenge for all pupils. This is an ongoing priority across the school.

Middle leaders, many of whom are relatively new to their roles, are receiving effective support to develop in their roles. You and other senior leaders model strong leadership. Leaders at all levels are now held to account for the performance in their areas or subjects. They are starting to make a valuable contribution to improving teaching and learning by working with teachers to improve their skills. This coordinated and strategic approach to developing leadership capacity is bearing fruit. However, you recognise that the further development of leadership remains a priority.

The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. They said that their children are safe and that, in most cases, pupils are well supported in their learning. A typical comment from parents praises the extra-curricular activities on offer. 'Our children are well taught and looked after at the school, but what sets the school apart is its opportunities for learning and experiences outside of the classroom, ranging from forest school activities to residential visits.'

Parents also commented that, in the past, the school did not communicate with them enough. However, you now send out regular newsletters and use social media to share good news with families. Parents really value this as they can see at a glance what their children are doing on a daily basis. You acknowledge that there is more work to do to ensure that all parents understand the need for change and support the school as it improves.

Pupils' behave well in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtime. The positive relationships between teachers, other adults and pupils are a real strength of the school. Pupils learn about other cultures from the well-established links with a school in Tanzania. One pupil commented, 'Everybody is welcome here, everybody is equal and everybody is respected.' This was reflected in the way in which pupils support each other at playtime as play leaders. Pupils cooperated well during a forest school session. Pupils explored together, made music and cooked banana curry on the campfire.

The school provides exemplary support for pupils and their families through a focused support programme. A nurture group runs every morning for pupils who need additional support. The school has achieved a great deal of success with this approach. Pupils who previously were not able to engage with learning due to a lack of confidence have thrived and are now participating in a wide range of activities such as debating and singing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. There is a culture of vigilance across the school. Staff make regular referrals to the designated senior leader (DSL) and discuss their concerns to ensure that all children who may be vulnerable receive the support they need. Referrals are followed up in a timely fashion.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They learn through assemblies and lessons about how to stay safe online and about what makes a healthy relationship.

Attendance is now above the national average and persistent absence is well below the national average. The school provides targeted support to individual families, using outside agencies, where appropriate, to ensure that pupils attend school and are ready to learn. A number of pupils who previously had poor attendance have been supported to improve.

Teachers and leaders know the school community well and are proactive in supporting when necessary. The head of school is the DSL and is one of three appointed safeguarding champions who lead the local networking group.

Inspection findings

- Despite slight improvements, attainment at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 was well below national averages.
- In the past, pupils did not achieve as well as they could have done because teachers and leaders did not have high enough expectations of what all pupils could and should be achieving. This is not now the case, but it will take time to fill the remaining gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' reading skills are not as well developed as they should be. Children generally decode well and use their phonics skills to sound out unfamiliar words. However, they do not all read with fluency or with good intonation. Their reading records show that they compete to read the most books, but there is less focus on comprehension or the quality of their reading experiences.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has declined year on year over the last three years. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well below the national average. Outcomes for boys were significantly below national averages in all

areas of the early learning goals.

- Leaders have taken decisive action to halt the decline in early years. Well-established routines and positive relationships now support children to develop their skills and independence rapidly. Children make good progress in writing as a result of effective adult support and direction.
- Staff changes along with improvements to the environment in the Nursery have brought about urgently needed improvements in children's learning and development. This is likely to have an impact on the skills, knowledge and understanding of pupils joining Reception in future years. Children now enjoy a wide range of engaging and challenging activities, such as designing, making and testing a water wheel, planting seeds or hanging out washing. Children currently in Nursery are already better prepared for school. They follow instructions and routines, play well together and support each other when they are upset.
- Current assessments indicate that a higher proportion of pupils are now working at the expected standard for their age in key stage 1. However, with weak outcomes in early years over the last two years, many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge and skills. Teachers are working hard to close these.
- Attainment at the expected standard and at greater depth in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 declined in 2017 and was well below the national average, particularly for girls, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was also below the national average in 2017.
- Leaders have introduced a new teaching approach for mathematics that is starting to have an impact. Teachers ask pupils to explain their thinking to identify any misconceptions. They then provide additional support on the spot to fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills before moving on. As a result, pupils are starting to catch up and make better progress.
- As a result of effective support and training, teaching is starting to improve. Lesson observations and work in pupils' books show that teachers are now setting tasks that are more accurately matched to pupils' prior learning. They are beginning to ask more challenging questions. Teachers support pupils to understand better the things they need to improve. These effective teaching approaches are starting to become embedded. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across the school.
- Current assessment information indicates that, in most year groups, an increasing proportion of pupils are achieving at the expected standard for their age. However, because of considerable gaps in pupils' learning, this will not have sufficient impact on outcomes by the end of this academic year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders receive ongoing support to develop their skills and contribute further to improvements across the school

- the quality of teaching improves further by ensuring that the recently introduced strategies become embedded and are consistently applied
- there is a concerted push to improve pupils' reading skills, focusing on the quality of their reading experiences, not just the quantity of reading opportunities
- parents and other stakeholders are engaged more fully in the improvement of the school so that everyone shares the aspirations of the new leaders.

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 Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the head of school to discuss the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. Together, we reviewed information about attendance, behaviour, exclusions and current assessment.

We visited lessons together in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. We looked at pupils' books during our visits to lessons. I listened to six pupils reading and reviewed their reading records.

I observed pupils at lunchtime in the dining hall and in the playground. I spoke to pupils about what they like about school and how to stay safe. I had a tour of the school with four members of your school council.

I met with the head of school and a governor about safeguarding. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Mercian Education Trust. I scrutinised a selection of governing body minutes.

I took account of 16 responses to the staff survey, one response to the pupil survey and 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. You also shared with me your analysis of parents' responses to a questionnaire sent out in November 2017.