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Mrs Peta Blow
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Dear Mrs Blow

Short inspection of Morden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 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 March 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, alongside leaders and governors, have a thorough understanding of the school and you accurately identify priorities for continued improvement. You have improved the quality of teaching and the development of pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. This is a strength of the school.

Leaders use research to drive improvements in the school. Staff are well supported and challenged to improve further. They value the training opportunities that you provide, and they work closely as a team. Typical of others, one new staff member said, 'I have never felt so well supported as I do now.'

You, leaders and staff have continued to focus on improving pupils' outcomes. This has led to success in some areas, including mathematics and writing. However, pupils' outcomes in reading are not as strong. This is an area for improvement. The school offers exceptional pastoral care. Leaders use a range of strategies to provide support for vulnerable pupils and their families. The school is a calm and purposeful learning environment. You set high expectations for behaviour. Positive relationships are evident between staff and pupils and create a happy atmosphere around the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders are highly experienced and knowledgeable about safeguarding. Records are detailed, well organised and high quality. Referrals to external agencies are carried out in a timely manner. Leaders make effective use of the local authority's early help services to give support to vulnerable pupils and their families.

Through regular training and routine checks, staff understand their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that high levels of vigilance are evident at all times. Staff understand how to respond if concerns are raised. Leaders and governors have a thorough understanding of the community the school serves, and the potential risks faced by children. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to work at the school prior to their appointment.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance effectively. This focus has ensured that pupils' attendance rates have improved and are in line with the national average, and persistent absence is below the national average. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed. Pupils are confident that they could speak to an adult in school if they had a concern. They are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Inspection findings

- The first area I explored was pupils' progress and outcomes in reading, particularly pupils who are the weakest readers. This is because over the past two years pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 has been below the national expected standard.
- Leaders and staff have introduced a whole-class reading strategy, using age-appropriate, high-quality texts. Initial indications are that pupils are excited by this new approach. For example, in a Year 5 class I observed pupils enthusiastically talking about the book 'Street child'.
- I listened to pupils from all classes read individually. In the Reception Year and Year 1 classes, I found that some children were unable to use their knowledge of phonics accurately. This means that they are not well prepared to gain full access to the wider curriculum.
- In other year groups, pupils' progress in reading is variable. Some pupils identified as weaker readers make strong progress through daily reading practice. However, other pupils are unable to decode two- and three-syllable words and lack strategies to blend letters. These pupils are not confident in using their phonics knowledge to read accurately.
- Expectations for children's knowledge of phonics by the end of early years are too low. Resources are not well selected to support children's reading. The school uses a combination of different phonics programmes and reading books. This leads to inconsistencies in teaching and does not help children to practise the letters and sounds that they have learned. As a result, children's reading progress

is hindered. These are areas for improvement.

- The second area that I looked at was the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that outcomes improve for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who meet the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2 has been below that of other pupils nationally.
- You have identified the need to improve outcomes for this group of pupils and have developed a strategy to address this. The progress of these pupils is closely monitored. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a range of small-group interventions with highly trained staff across the school. For example, experienced leaders offer additional support to pupils in Year 3 who did not make strong progress in key stage 1. This is helping to improve progress and outcomes for these pupils.
- The third area I looked at was how effectively leaders have developed pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics. You have introduced a problem-solving approach to all mathematics lessons and this is improving pupils' reasoning skills.
- Teachers give pupils across all year groups opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems and deepen their reasoning. Teachers question pupils' understanding skilfully and challenge them to explain their answers. Pupils talk confidently about the demanding tasks that their teachers set them and have an excellent understanding of problem-solving and reasoning. For example, typical of many, a Year 6 pupil told me, 'I use "answer, prove it, explain" in all my maths problems.' Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils have a deepening knowledge of mathematical concepts. Pupils can explain how they solve problems successfully. Pupils' outcomes are improving in mathematics, and more pupils are reaching the high standard at the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics is taught using a unified approach throughout the early years and key stage 1
- expectations of pupils' phonics knowledge by the end of Reception Year are raised and reading books are well-matched to children's phonic knowledge.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hook
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

At the beginning of the inspection, I met with you and leaders to consider your self-evaluation and areas of focus. I met with you and other leaders to discuss and review a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. I was accompanied on a visit to classrooms by you and leaders. During these visits to classrooms, I scrutinised books and spoke to children and pupils. I listened to pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 read. I observed some mathematics classes, looked at reading books in the library and spoke to staff. I met with you and leaders to discuss the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and examined related assessment information. I listened to pupils read individually and asked some to use their knowledge of phonics to identify sounds. I met with five governors and held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. I considered 27 responses from parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered 54 pupil and 25 staff responses to the online surveys.