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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Andrew Stear
Headteacher
Milford School
Church Road
Milford
Godalming
Surrey
GU8 5JA

Dear Mr Stear

Short inspection of Milford School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have worked with determination to raise expectations in the school. Without exception, parents and carers, governors and staff agree that the school has gone from strength to strength under your leadership. You have created a warm and inclusive atmosphere, based on the school's vision, 'grow, learn, believe, achieve'. Your collaborative approach to leadership ensures that the capacity to improve the school further is clear to see. Senior and middle leaders support and challenge teachers well through precise feedback and knowledgeable advice.

Pupils love everything about their school, especially going on trips and playing with their friends. They know that if they ever feel lonely, the 'playground pals' will help them find someone to play with. They think their teachers are 'kind', 'amazing' and that 'they give good advice'.

Parents were effusive in their praise. Every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to which there were 93 responses, would recommend the school. One parent wrote, 'It is everything you could wish for, for the start of their education. It will give my children brilliant foundations.' Another parent commented, 'We are made to feel a big part of the school family.' Parents value how much they are involved in their children's learning and school life. They enjoy attending the many events that the school holds. Grandparents too are encouraged

to become part of the school community, with over 190 grandparents attending a special day this term focusing on mathematics learning.

The previous inspection highlighted many strengths, including the good behaviour of pupils, and effective governance. These aspects continue to be strong. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They share your ambitious aims for developing the school further. The inspectors at the previous inspection also noted what a happy school Milford was. During my visit, I was impressed with how happy pupils are in their learning and how proud they are of their school. Staff too, enjoy being at Milford. As one member of staff wrote, 'Morale has never been higher. Everyone is keen and happy to be at work.'

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that pupils knew what was expected of them. You have been effective in this aspect of school improvement. Pupils confidently told me how to be successful in their work. For example, in a Year 1 writing lesson, pupils knew they needed to ensure that they had finger spaces between each word and full stops in the right places. As a result, their basic skills in writing were strong. Leaders were also asked to ensure that work was at the right level of difficulty for pupils. Your actions to address this have been largely successful. However, sometimes work is too easy for the most able pupils.

The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in writing is too low. Improving the use of additional funding, including sharpening the evaluation of this funding, is a key priority for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. High levels of vigilance and strong relationships between staff and pupils ensure that any concerns are picked up and reported swiftly. Day-to-day routines are secure. Any necessary actions are completed without delay and are followed up efficiently. Your ongoing work with external safeguarding agencies means that you make effective use of them when needed. Leaders ensure that there is timely, ongoing training for staff and volunteers so that they know how to keep pupils safe. Safer recruitment checks are thorough. All adults are fully vetted to ensure that they are safe to work with children.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and trust their teachers to look after them well. As one pupil said to me, 'Teachers make our school a better place.' They appreciate the 'worry monsters' who live in their classrooms. They know, however, that they must also tell an adult if anything concerns them. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Parents also unanimously agree that their children are safe in school. As one parent wrote: 'Milford is a lovely school with teachers who really care. They create a safe and nurturing environment for my child to learn.'

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that we would focus on: how well teaching ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs; the effectiveness of the curriculum; and the teaching of writing.
- Milford is a very inclusive school where the most vulnerable pupils are supported well in their learning, with care and dignity. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and low-attaining pupils can attain. As a result, these pupils make good progress academically, emotionally and socially. Provisional performance information for 2018 indicates that the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standards of attainment at the end of key stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics, was in line or better than that seen nationally. However, during our visits to lessons and while looking at pupils' books, we saw that the most able pupils are not routinely challenged in their learning.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and rich curriculum which has many exciting experiences built in, both indoors and out. Pupils particularly enjoy visiting new places linked to their learning, for example a recent farm trip and to Bird World. Pupils learn to play musical instruments and participate in a wide range of sporting activities. Milford's curriculum has a clear progression of skills and knowledge for each subject and as a result, most pupils learn well across the curriculum. However, the most able pupils are not challenged in all areas of the curriculum. Their progress in a wide range of subjects is not as strong as it could be. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is well developed. There are many opportunities at Milford for pupils to learn about equality, diversity and respect of others. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- You have focused rightly on improving attainment and progress in writing. My classroom visits, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, showed that pupils are making good progress in writing. There are many examples of pupils writing at length, with the basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar being secure. Their handwriting and presentation of work are of a consistently high standard. In the past, the gender gap in writing attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been wider than the national picture. Provisional performance information for the end of key stage 1 in 2018 indicates that leaders' work in this area has been very successful. Despite the success in raising attainment in writing, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is too low. Leaders do not have a secure understanding of how effective the additional funding is. This means that governors are not fully able to hold leaders to account for the use of this funding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are routinely challenged, including across the wider curriculum

- they review and refine the use of additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss the school's effectiveness. You and I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to them and look at their work. We also looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I considered 93 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also considered. I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school and evaluated a range of evidence pupils presented to me about their school. There were no answers to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and met with middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; the pupil premium strategy; information about pupils' progress; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.