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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs D Wheeler
Headteacher
Minster in Sheppey Primary School
Brecon Chase
Minster
Sheerness
Kent
ME12 2HX

Dear Mrs Wheeler

Short inspection of Minster in Sheppey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You, governors, senior and middle leaders, and members of the multi-academy trust have a very strong shared determination for pupils to excel. You know the school very well and demonstrate high aspirations, with a strong resolve to help all pupils achieve their potential. The school vision, 'to be the best we can be', has been adopted meaningfully by all members of the school community. Collectively, you have the trust of parents, carers and the wider community to improve the school further.

The previous inspection recognised strengths in leadership, teaching, pupils' achievements, the early years and behaviour. These successes have been strengthened further. The role of governors in overseeing the work of the school was an area for improvement at the last inspection. The governing body has since been restructured and governors have taken part in a range of relevant training. Governors now work together strategically to review the school's successes and weaknesses effectively, focusing closely on pupils' standards. Pupils' achievement in mathematics was also highlighted for improvement in the previous inspection. The

staff have completed training in teaching reasoning and problem-solving, and work in partnership with other schools. Pupils increasingly use a range of strategies independently to reflect more deeply about their mathematics. As a result, pupils are making better progress in mathematics.

School leaders have highly effective systems for school improvement planning and self-evaluation, and they identify appropriate priorities to improve the school further. Pupils' progress and standards overall are above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Together with governors and leaders, you monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan rigorously to ensure that resources are used effectively to raise standards.

Leaders have created a broad and exciting curriculum providing a wide range of first-hand learning experiences that are relevant to, and appreciated by, pupils. For example, pupils visit the Island of Harty when finding out about the local area, and the Eastchurch Aviation Museum when learning about local history. Pupils learn about Hinduism when exploring the Puja ceremony, and the characteristics of the rainforest when designing and making their own survival shelters.

During visits to classrooms, we saw examples of very focused and enthusiastic teaching, with pupils being challenged to take part in a range of learning activities. For example, pupils shared equipment to make models from junk, and others discussed and worked together to solve problems involving decimals. Year 6 pupils explored a text on animal rights and learned new vocabulary. Year 1 pupils had a chance to observe and learn about a range of wildlife presented by a visiting speaker. Staff question pupils carefully to help them think more deeply about their work. Pupils talk about their learning and benefit from working together. As a consequence of very strong teaching, the majority of pupils across the school are making corresponding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Staff know pupils as individuals and care for them well. Staff work together effectively as a team. Along with the family liaison officer and the pastoral support leader, they ensure that pupils and their families get support, as and when it is needed. Pupils with specific needs are helped and encouraged successfully to take part in the school's activities. Pupils speak very confidently and thoughtfully about their school. They are very polite, and share their views enthusiastically. The vast majority of pupils behave well, enjoy the challenge of school and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that they appreciate how their teachers make them think hard. Some pupils, however, say that they would like to be challenged even more.

Leaders organise a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy activities such as: the breakfast club, which also provides help with literacy and numeracy; cheerleading; basketball; gymnastics; and taking part in a wide range of forest school and beach school activities. The school has a small animal farm on site where pupils learn how to care for sheep, ducks, rabbits and chickens. Collectively, these activities contribute successfully to pupils' strong personal development and support their learning. As one parent commented, 'The environment is great, with a

lot of extras being added, which has further increased the learning for our children.'

Safeguarding is effective.

- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Pupils' welfare and happiness is a high priority for the school. As a result of regular safeguarding training, staff know what action to take when they have a concern about a pupil. All staff understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe and staff know that they need to respond promptly if they have concerns. Leaders make sure that up-to-date and detailed records are maintained. Staff, including the family liaison officer, work well with a range of outside agencies to provide effective help for pupils and their families. This support is appreciated by the vast majority of parents.
- Most parents find staff approachable and are confident that any concerns they raise will be addressed. There is a range of useful information for parents on the school website, including advice about online safety and how to support learning. Almost all the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are confident that pupils are safe at school and are well looked after.
- Pupils learn about safety when taking part in the wide range of activities organised by staff. Pupils know how to stay safe around a campfire and when using computers. For example, they speak articulately about the importance of not sharing their personal information online or with strangers. Pupils are very happy to talk to staff should they have a concern, and are confident that their problems will be sorted out. Incidents of bullying and racism are uncommon but, when they do occur, leaders take matters seriously and take appropriate action. Consequently, pupils are safe, and the vast majority of pupils feel safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we agreed to focus on: the progress of most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in reading and mathematics at key stage 2; how effectively leaders are supporting early years children to exceed the early learning goals; and how successfully pupils at key stages 1 and 2 make progress in all subjects across the wider curriculum.
- Leaders have reviewed the teaching of mathematics across the school. Additional resources have been purchased and there is a sharper focus on extending pupils' mathematical thinking. Staff build pupils' skills effectively by introducing new mathematical ideas in planned steps. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, solve problems, look for patterns, explain and justify their thinking and create their own challenges successfully. Parents welcome the range of activities that are provided and the information sent home to help them support their children. Pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is monitored closely, and those who are in danger of falling behind are helped to catch up. The majority of pupils make very strong progress in mathematics. As you have recognised, however, too few are attaining higher standards at the end of key stage 2, and there is more to be done in this respect.

- Pupils enjoy reading. They read widely and choose their books thoughtfully. They appreciate the wide range of exciting and challenging texts provided. Pupils read with expression and discuss their books articulately, making deductions from the text. Staff ask challenging questions and extend pupils' vocabulary consciously, as they apply their skills in other subjects. As a result, all pupils make very strong progress in reading.
- Leadership in early years is very strong. Children are given a wide range of activities in a stimulating environment, allowing them to learn effectively both inside and out. Staff know the children well and talk to them routinely about their learning. Staff ask questions to make the children think more carefully. Activities are now linked to the children's changing interests and the most able are targeted for extra challenge. The majority of children in Reception make very strong progress, many from low starting points, and standards overall are above national averages. As a result of the recent changes, assessment information for 2018 shows increasing numbers of children exceeding the early learning goals.
- Leaders have created a broad topic-based curriculum that links subjects together thoughtfully in themes. Every topic has an exciting starter activity that arouses pupils' interests, and a concluding task that is often shared with parents so they are part of their children's learning. Pupils are taken on school visits and speakers are invited into classroom to make learning fun, relevant and interesting. For example, pupils learn about Remembrance Day from a talk by a serving soldier and about Fairtrade from a supermarket manager. Pupils are able to use their literacy skills to support learning in all subjects and similarly make increasing use of their mathematical skills. Leaders have clear expectations about what pupils will learn in each subject, and in each year group, helping to ensure that pupils make strong progress as they move through the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- even more pupils at key stage 2 are challenged consistently to attain the higher standards that they are capable of in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Addison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and other senior leaders, the chair of governors and five other members of the governing body, and two representatives of the multi-academy trust. I also met a group of pupils from Years 2 to 6. I heard a group of higher-ability Year 6 pupils read. You and senior leaders accompanied me on visits to classrooms in all key stages, where I observed learning, spoke to pupils and looked at their work. A range of early years journals, mathematics and topic books were reviewed with senior leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. I took account of 153 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 72 free-text comments. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; information on the school's website; safety records; minutes of meetings; various policies; and information about pupils' progress.