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Mr Eglin
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Dear Mr Eglin

Short inspection of Morda CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 June 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.**

Since the last inspection, you and the staff have maintained the family-friendly and inclusive ethos for all pupils, parents and carers. As one parent put it: 'My child enjoys coming to school because staff are caring, focused on whole-child development and make learning fun.' Relationships are generally positive between adults and pupils. Most pupils enjoy school, behave well and work hard in lessons.

You and the staff are committed to providing good-quality care and education to all pupils. Staff in the school work well as a team and have a detailed knowledge of pupils and their families. You and the staff are very diligent in making sure that children are safe and happy at school. You have focused closely on improving the quality of teaching, but this has not raised pupils' achievement enough. Weaknesses are beginning to be addressed, but you, governors and the school improvement adviser acknowledge that there is more to be done to improve the quality of teaching and ensure that all pupils make good progress.

You have provided ongoing training for all staff and have shared examples of good practice both in and outside the school. However, due to significant staffing issues this training and support has not improved the overall quality of teaching and learning. In particular there has been limited progress in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have made some progress towards ensuring that pupils are able to transfer

their skills in literacy and mathematics to other subjects. However, there is more to be done to ensure that pupils work to the same standard as they do in the core subjects. I found some promising recent examples of better skills evident in pupils' work, such as the good-quality writing in Year 4 history workbooks following a recent trip to Wroxeter Roman Villa.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding that helps pupils flourish and learn in a safe and secure environment. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils' welfare is at the forefront of all the school does. Timely referrals are made where concerns need escalating in order to fully protect pupils. All record-keeping is systematic and well organised, and records are stored securely. Safer recruitment checks are carried out to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. You and other leaders provide regular training for all staff that is appropriate for the needs of the school and its context and staff understand fully their roles and responsibilities.

Pupils spoken to feel safe in school and well cared for by staff. They demonstrated a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including when using digital media.

Inspection findings

- Pupils overwhelmingly stated that they enjoyed reading and spoke with real enthusiasm about the books they were reading. However, some pupils who are not yet fluent readers have difficulty understanding challenging vocabulary because their phonic skills are not well developed. Although most pupils catch up with their phonics skills by the end of Year 2, too few pupils achieve the national standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 compared to pupils nationally. Therefore, pupils who are not yet fluent readers are not able to understand what they are reading because they have to spend too much of their time decoding words. This hampers their understanding of the text and the meaning of challenging vocabulary, limiting their progress. Progress in reading for current cohorts is not good enough across the school.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school, including in early years, needs improvement. Only a third of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development last year. A similarly low proportion achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Leaders and governors have not evaluated the effect of pupil premium funding. This needs to be addressed urgently so that you can identify which strategies are making a difference. The school's assessment information shows wide differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Work in pupils' books, together with published data and unvalidated results for 2018, show that very few disadvantaged pupils are working at, or achieve, greater depth.
- Leaders have developed a systematic and consistent approach to developing fluency in arithmetic. As a result, current pupils are making the progress they

should. Pupils have effective strategies to support their calculation of number and readily available resources to support their work. Pupils' work in this element of mathematics is strong. However, reasoning, logic and problem-solving are less well developed and pupils have limited opportunities to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Leaders' improvement plans to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their fluency in number to deepen their understanding are not well developed. They lack the precision of actions and measurable outcomes to enable governors to hold school leaders to account for their progress in this area.

- Where pupils are not making enough progress in reading, teachers provide tailored support. However, this support is not always effective because leaders have not yet eliminated weaknesses in teaching nor have they been able to share best practice effectively due to staffing difficulties. Most parents are appreciative of the additional support provided for pupils, but some parents have concerns about the management of behaviour and the effect it has on the learning of other pupils. During the inspection in most lessons and on the playground, pupils behaved well. However, in some lessons low-level disruptive behaviour distracted pupils from learning and making progress. Often this was the result of learning not being well matched to pupils' needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in reading continues to develop pupils' fluency and comprehension, through more effective teaching of phonics and early reading strategies
- the use of pupil premium funding is better evaluated, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make progress at least in line with that of other pupils nationally
- pupils develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of reasoning, logic and problem-solving in mathematics
- development planning is precisely focused on the next steps to bring about improvement in outcomes for pupils, and they are measurable so that governors can better hold leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

John Demmerling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, governors, the school adviser commissioned by the local authority and a representative of the local authority. I discussed the work of the school, including processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. Together with you, I observed teaching across the school from Reception to Year 6, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked in their workbooks. I also heard readers from Years 1, 4 and 6. I talked to pupils to gather their views about school and to determine whether they felt safe and the typicality of behaviour.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I reviewed the school's evaluation of its work, together with a report from the local authority. I took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text responses from parents, along with the school's own survey of parents' views. I also reviewed the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 12 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.