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Mr Michael Tidd
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Dear Mr Michael Tidd

Short inspection of Medmerry Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

After the last inspection, leaders did not securely embed the necessary changes needed to further improve the school. Consequently, standards dipped for some pupils. Since you joined the school in September 2017, after the retirement of the previous head of school, you have wasted no time in making significant improvements to the quality of education in the school. You have quickly gained the trust and respect of trustees, parents and carers, pupils and staff. Parents told me that communication is much improved and that they feel welcome in the school. One parent expressed the view of many by saying, 'Since Mr Tidd arrived at the school, it has gone from strength to strength.'

In particular, you have raised the quality of teaching and improved the quality of the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants appreciate the training that they have received, which has helped them to hone their practice and keep up to date with the latest expectations for the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), writing and mathematics. Teachers now have a better understanding of individual pupils' starting points, which is helping them to plan more precisely to meet pupils' needs. As a result of the improvements you have instigated, pupils' outcomes have been raised substantially. Last year, for example, pupils in Year 6 achieved standards broadly in line with pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in mathematics are now particularly strong throughout the

school.

Pupils are friendly, welcoming and well behaved. They enjoy school, as reflected by their regular attendance. Pupils know that teachers care for them and will help them with their work if they need it. Pupils are full of praise for the improvements you have made to the ethos and behaviour in the school. They told me that since you have joined, behaviour is much better and that there is no longer any bullying. Pupils especially like the praise and rewards they receive for good work and effort.

Pupils enjoy learning across the whole curriculum, and especially like the wide range of extra-curricular experiences that are included in the curriculum, such as trips to Kew Gardens, Goodwood, Bristol and the local beach. They proudly told me of the many sporting clubs they attend, including football, archery and kickboxing. The curriculum teaches pupils to be accepting of each other's differences, and they display an age-appropriate awareness of the importance of equality, for example in race, disability, gender and sexuality. Pupils benefit from taking on responsibilities, such as when representing their classmates in the school council and through being 'peer mediators' who help fellow pupils sort out any minor fallings-out. Such experiences add to pupils' engagement in school, give them a sense of pride and broaden their experiences of the wider world, helping to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are united in their desire to ensure that children are kept safe. They are well trained to recognise the signs that may indicate neglect or abuse and report any concerns promptly. Staff are confident that they will be listened to by leaders when they raise any issues. Leaders' thorough record-keeping allows them to spot any issues that need to be brought to the attention of external agencies. Leaders work effectively with the local authority and other agencies to support the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils feel safe in school. They told me that they know any adult will help them if they have any worries. The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe online and in their community. For example, pupils told me that a recent visit to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution helped them to understand how to stay safe on the beach and in the sea. Pupils understand the importance of being kind to their peers if they communicate with them online. They also know not to give out personal information to anyone on the internet.

Leaders and those responsible for governance carry out all necessary checks on adults working in the school. During the inspection, some minor administrative errors found in the single central record, where these checks are recorded, were quickly remedied.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and those responsible for governance work very well together. Collectively, you have an accurate and precise understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses in the school. Trustees and the school community council check the impact of your work well, including through talking to pupils and staff about the changes being made. You are developing the roles of senior and middle leaders well, including by giving them new areas of responsibility and access to external training in leadership and curriculum development. Staff undertake their leadership roles enthusiastically and are making a positive difference to the school. However, your plans do not set out clearly enough who is responsible for leading the different aspects of school development, so some leaders are not quite sure about their role in monitoring the impact of the improvements they are making.
- At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to improve the level of challenge in lessons and the way teachers use pupils' progress information to inform their teaching. Since joining the school, you have introduced a more rigorous approach to using assessment information to help staff to identify pupils' different starting points and the progress that pupils make. Teachers are starting to use this information to raise the levels of challenge for pupils. However, there is not yet a consistent approach throughout the school, and consequently not enough pupils achieve the greater depth and higher standards at the end of each key stage. You recognise this and are putting in place further training for teachers, including through using expertise from across the trust to support teachers' professional development.
- Leaders ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent appropriately to raise standards. Teachers have a good understanding of how to meet these pupils' individual needs. Additional extra help, especially with developing pupils' literacy, is used appropriately to prevent pupils falling behind. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are achieving standards broadly in line with other pupils nationally. However, the most able disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Leaders make sure that funding for vulnerable pupils supports their personal development and welfare well. Pupils are well cared for and receive timely extra help with any issues, should they need it. Through improving communication with parents, staff are successfully developing a detailed understanding of vulnerable pupils' different needs. This approach is enabling you to tailor your support even more precisely. For example, you have noticed that the uptake of extra-curricular activities is not as high as it could be for disadvantaged pupils, so are rightly considering how best to improve this.
- You have noticed that pupils' achievements in reading have not been quite as strong as they could be. Therefore, this year you are raising the profile of reading. Staff have created a 'buzz' about reading throughout the school. Parents in the early years appreciate the exciting books that children take home, which are helping to instil a love of reading from the time children join the school. Older pupils enjoy reading new, high-quality texts together as a class. Pupils are inspired by these texts, using them to aid their understanding of the topics they are studying and to develop their writing skills. Pupils are highly appreciative of

the rewards they receive for reading regularly and for improving their reading skills. Middle leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of their work is in its early stages. However, you have already noted distinct improvements in pupils' phonics skills in key stage 1, and some rapid progress is being made in reading by pupils in key stage 2. You are now ensuring that pupils can demonstrate their understanding of what they are reading in the written form.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieves the greater depth and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage
- you continue to develop the roles, responsibilities and skills of leaders and ensure that improvement plans reflect clearly leaders' accountabilities for monitoring the school's work
- the administration of safeguarding reflects the strong safeguarding culture evident in the school.

I am copying this letter to 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 West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, other leaders and a group of staff. I held meetings with representatives from the Schoolsworks multi-academy trust and the chair of the school community council. With you and other leaders, I visited every class to see the learning taking place. I spoke to parents as they brought their children to school in the morning and considered the 121 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including the 26 free-text responses. I spoke with pupils during lessons and met with a group of pupils. I looked at a range of pupils' books with staff and considered the 19 responses to the staff survey. I checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, monitoring and improvement records and performance information. I examined the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and scrutinised minutes of the school community council. I reviewed the checks you make on the suitability of adults to work with children.