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Mr David Perkins
Principal
Littletown Primary Academy
Honiton Bottom Road
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Dear Mr Perkins

Short inspection of Littletown Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Even though there has been a change of leadership and a period of interim headship, governors and senior leaders have continued to act in the best interests of the pupils. They have tackled the priorities from the previous inspection and they ensure that pupils learn well and make progress.

Since your arrival in January 2018, you have provided determined and energetic leadership. Working with the vice-principal, you have introduced a wide range of initiatives that have further strengthened learning and teaching in the school. These improvements are based on your own careful analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development and recommended by recent national research. The improvements to the curriculum, and the teaching of literacy and mathematics, have brought about a greater consistency, and a shared understanding of expectations. The new approaches have considerably strengthened the challenge for pupils. Pupils learn well and are excited and enthusiastic. Your wider priorities, for example tackling teachers' workload, upgrading the community room and improving the quality of school lunches, show your determination to establish Littletown Academy firmly as a nurturing and exciting place to learn and work.

You are well supported by a team of highly skilled senior and middle leaders. Your reorganisation of their roles has meant that there is a greater clarity of responsibilities. They are now effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across a key stage or in subject areas, and supporting where necessary.

Pupils work and play well together. Your approach of involving and informing pupils about changes means that they understand the reasons for rules and expectations. This leads to a harmonious atmosphere where pupils are taking an ever-increasing responsibility for their school and their own behaviour. Pupils are very motivated by their learning. They are eager to talk about their work and share their new skills and knowledge. The events at the end of the unit of work when parents and carers join their children in the classroom are a good demonstration of this. During my visit, Year 6 pupils enthusiastically and proudly encouraged their parents to join in with practical activities related to the health and biology they had been taught.

Parents and carers recognise the recent changes that you have made and say that these are very positive. Comments typical of those expressed by the parents included, 'The principal has led the school very well and enthusiastically and has made very effective and inspiring changes to the school which help to motivate the children to try their best,' and, 'The principal has been great for the school, clearly passionate about the children's education and how they are taught, changing the approach of how kids learn.' Nearly all parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Children, a large proportion entering with levels of development below those typical for their age, make a strong start in your Nursery and Reception. Each year, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 continues to be in line with national averages. Pupils make progress throughout key stage 1 and 2 so that standards are broadly in line with national averages. The school's current assessment data and the work in books indicate that more pupils in Year 6 are reaching or exceeding the expected standards for their age than previously.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other members of staff demonstrate a strong commitment to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders share responsibilities for complex work well. Recent improvements to record-keeping mean that communication is even more systematic. Recruitment procedures are extremely well managed and there are thorough checks on the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers before they are appointed. The arrangements for training are good and the school is well informed about local issues, such as the concerns related to 'county lines'. Staff know how to respond if they are concerned.

Staff know pupils and their families well. They offer support through individual help and group workshops. They work effectively with other agencies when this is important. They are tenacious in following things through to make sure that pupils are safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. Those parents who responded on Parent View and staff who completed the staff survey wholeheartedly agree. Pupils welcome the opportunities to talk about their concerns. They say that bullying is rare and feel adults will sort out any issues that arise. Pupils are aware of the importance of their own mental health following the school's focus on this area.

Inspection findings

- Governors and leaders at all levels have a good understanding of the performance of the school. There is a culture of trust and transparency that means there is a shared understanding of the school's priorities. Governors support and challenge well. They are very well informed about the school. They are aspirational for the school and its community. They are also hard-working and pragmatic, ensuring resources are well deployed and make a difference.
- One of the key lines of enquiry to determine whether the school remained good was to examine how effectively leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well and meet expected standards. Historical data suggests that these pupils do not make as much progress as others and few attain the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 and 2. In recent years, no disadvantaged pupil from the school has attained greater depth in the national curriculum tests. You have rightly recognised that this is a key issue for the school and you have taken determined action. You have considerably raised the profile of the needs of these pupils in the school. Governors are very clear that this is a priority for the school and are aspirational for these pupils. You have strengthened leadership and the new leader has quickly got to grips with the task. Teachers and teaching assistants now provide a range of well-researched interventions for pupils that are targeted to remove barriers to learning. You have strengthened your monitoring of the progress of these pupils. The special needs coordinator and pupil-premium lead now work closely together. This means that pupils with more complex needs have more seamless provision. You have strengthened strategic planning in the early years foundation stage. You ensure that resources can be targeted quickly, depending on the progress of the individual pupil.
- The school's assessment information and work in books show that more disadvantaged pupils are on track to reach age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2 than in previous years. Some pupils are on track to attain greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout the school more pupils than previously are making good progress. When we visited classrooms, it was clear that disadvantaged pupils are engaged and interested in their work. They are writing at length and with increasing complexity. They are tackling challenging mathematical problems. Intervention records from small groups show that pupils are making progress developing important learning skills. Pupils talk positively about the help they receive. They feel very well supported to do their best. They appreciate the support of the specific groups that are on offer, for example the young carers group, which give them an opportunity to talk about their concerns. You recognise that the evaluation of some of the work still needs developing further and more evidence is needed to ensure that good academic progress is being maintained and pupils are attaining in line with governors' aspirations.
- Another line of enquiry was examining the progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2, of those pupils who were middle attainers at the end of Year 2. The progress of these pupils has not been as consistent as other groups of pupils in the school. This is because some of the teaching approaches

were not robust, challenging nor interesting enough. Not enough progress was being made throughout key stage 2 and too much catch-up was taking place in Year 6. Your high expectations for the achievement of all pupils is now threaded through challenging targets and clear performance management for all teachers. Teachers are supported and challenged effectively to ensure that all pupils achieve. You took strong action to ensure that pupils were in the right class group so that they could make the best progress possible. You have considerably strengthened the curriculum. The study of good-quality texts underpins the teaching of literacy. The teaching of mathematics is now much more consistent and ensures appropriate challenge and coverage of the different aspects. With governors' support, you have considerably strengthened the information technology provision in the school, as well as improving the library.

- Pupils are engaged in their learning. They talk about being challenged to do their very best. Parents report that their children talk about mathematics at home and want to learn more. Pupils confidently use computers to record and monitor their work as well as researching new information. Pupils read widely and often. Their written work shows developing creativity and imagination. Teachers are instilling a love of learning through the activities they plan. The school's assessment data shows more pupils, including middle attainers, are working at age-related expectations and making strong progress throughout key stage 2. You are aware that approaches and high expectations are not consistent all the time in all classrooms and this requires your continued attention. This means that activities planned are not always challenging and sometimes pupils' work is incomplete or untidy.
- A third line of enquiry examined the attainment of boys in the school. It appears from headline information that boys achieve less well than girls in the school. The senior leaders have themselves reflected on this issue and have examined the available data in detail. You monitor the performance of all groups in the school very carefully. To address any issues, you have ensured that changes implemented in the school incorporate ways to help boys learn successfully. In the early years, teachers ensure that writing has clear purpose, so, for example, boys are asked to label the models they make or to write instructions for others. The new approaches to mathematics in the school have ensured ongoing challenge and different ways of approaching problems. Methods used for learning times tables encourage competition, with points gained for speed and accuracy. You have widened the range of genres studied in literacy. You place greater emphasis on the regularity and importance of reading and have increased the number of non-fiction books in the library. Alongside this, you have considerably strengthened the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) in the school.
- Closer examination of data and in-depth knowledge of the pupils shows that the gap in attainment between boys and girls is related to other issues, for example the higher proportion of boys in the school with SEND. There is no gap between the achievement of boys and girls in the early years. Observation shows that boys are engaged in their learning and making progress. Boys I spoke with are enthusiastic about school. They understand the system for reading and enjoy recording the books they have read and answering questions in their notebooks.

Boys in Year 2 are confidently reading books at an appropriate level and using phonics skills appropriately. Boys are proud of the speed with which they answer times tables questions and compare each other's results in a friendly manner. As provision for pupils with SEND has been strengthened, there are clearer targets and monitoring and pupils, including boys, are making better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of disadvantaged pupils is further strengthened to ensure that pupils attain well and in line with governors' aspirations
- the high expectations and challenge evident in the majority of classrooms are consistent throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you and the vice-principal, middle leaders and governors. I spoke with pupils from the pupil-voice group and with many other pupils informally. I made observations of learning in classes and looked at examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised documentation from the school on a range of matters, including safeguarding. I took account of 100 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey Parent View. I also considered responses of pupils and staff to the Ofsted online surveys.