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8 February 2019

Ms Caroline Potter  
Headteacher  
Moorlands Primary School  
Kesteven Way  
Bitterne  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO18 5RJ

Dear Ms Potter,

### **Short inspection of Moorlands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 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 February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The acting deputy headteachers have stepped up to lead the school effectively during your illness and absence from school. They have worked collaboratively to ensure that the school maintains its many strengths. There has also been effective support from the local authority and two local schools. This has enabled the school to continue improving.

This school is a happy, lively and caring place where learning is stimulating and exciting. Pupils are proud to belong to the school. Those who answered the pupils' survey would recommend this school to other pupils. They say that the teachers 'make lessons fun and interesting'. Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire think the school has improved since its last inspection. They are proud to work at the school and say morale is high. They described it as a 'friendly place where there is a strong ethos of care'. Parents are happy with the school. They praise the way staff support their children's learning. One parent, expressing a view typical of many, commented: 'Teachers are very supportive and nurturing. They are all very approachable and willing to give up their time to discuss things.'

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes. The school has expanded so there are now two classes in every year group. As a result, around half of the teaching staff are new.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers' expectations of

pupils' achievements are always high. Leaders have worked hard to address this development point. In subjects such as English and those covered through topic work, teachers have very high expectations of pupils. The last inspection also identified the need for planning to be improved. The school's documentation shows that this aspect of provision has now been addressed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. There are careful recruitment checks made on the suitability of all adults working with pupils. The school's single central register is well maintained.

All staff receive regular safeguarding training. They have a clear understanding of what to report, such as the signs and symptoms of neglect. Any concerns are referred quickly to the designated safeguarding lead. Each pupil is well known to adults, so any changes in behaviour or circumstances are identified quickly. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.

Pupils said that there are occasional incidents of bullying but that staff are very quick in sorting these out. Most of the parents who I spoke to at the beginning of the inspection or who responded the Ofsted's questionnaire have no concerns about bullying or pupils' behaviour.

The school continues to work hard to improve the attendance of some pupils. It employs a range of successful strategies. One of these is to have a 'school attendance matters' mascot dog greet the pupils at the school's gates on some mornings.

### **Inspection findings**

- I looked at the impact of leadership on the school's development since the previous inspection. I found that leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is careful planning for school improvement. The progress of different groups of pupils is tracked very carefully. Leaders act quickly to put in place extra support for any pupil who is falling behind.
- Middle leaders are still developing their roles. Currently, there is a lack of precision, and occasional contradiction, in the feedback that they provide to teachers.
- The governors are strong advocates for the school. This is reflected in a comment from a parent, who stated: 'The governing body clearly care about the welfare of the children and educational standards, and this is mirrored in the leadership team who do a wonderful job to develop and motivate their teams.' Governors are very aware of the school's strengths and areas still to develop. They have been instrumental in making sure that, despite the absence of the headteacher, the school's leadership remains strong.
- I explored the learning and progress of pupils in mathematics. Leaders have

acted quickly to address the slower progress in mathematics last academic year. There is clear evidence in books that pupils are now given more opportunities to reason mathematically and problem solve. Most pupils are now making good progress in mathematics. However, most-able pupils are not given work that is challenging enough to stretch their skills still further. This is having an impact on the amount of progress they make.

- At the end of Year 2, in 2018, the proportions of pupils who attained the expected standards in reading and writing were above the national averages. For mathematics, the proportion was in line with the national average. However, now these pupils are in Year 3, their progress has slowed a little. You have recognised that this is an area to address quickly.
- I checked on pupils' progress in developing their phonics skills. Their books show that pupils are making strong progress in building their understanding of letters and the sounds they represent. Pupils' reading skills are developing well.
- Around a third of the pupils in the school are disadvantaged. Together with leaders, I examined how well these pupils are progressing. The school's use of pupil premium funding is very effective. Disadvantaged pupils attend well. The work in books shows that disadvantaged pupils make the same amount of progress as their peers. This is because the school's use of pupil premium is focused on strengthening pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is vibrant and interesting. Music is particularly strong. Pupils say they enjoy the musical theatre lessons. They play a range of instruments, including the tambourine, recorders and violins. Pupils from Year 3 upwards can play in the school's orchestra and enjoy singing in the choir. One parent, expressing the views of many, said: 'I am impressed with the amount of time that teachers give up to help the children, they have the opportunity to perform at school and at concerts, which is really exciting.'
- The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which appeal to all interests. In sport, pupils enjoy archery, karate, football and skateboarding. For those who are interested in nature, activities provide exciting opportunities which make use of the school's grounds. These include 'Grounds Week', when pupils learn about woodland animals and make wooden instruments.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide most-able pupils in mathematics with greater challenge so that they make stronger progress
- the progress of pupils in Year 3 is strengthened so that more pupils attain well
- middle leaders improve the support and guidance they give teachers so that it has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting deputy headteachers and other leaders. There was a discussion with governors, including the co-chairs. I also had a meeting with the local authority's representative. I met with a group of pupils and considered 78 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and took into consideration 61 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 15 free-text comments. I took account of the views of 43 staff, who responded to the Ofsted staff survey.

Together with leaders, I visited classes and looked at pupils' books. A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; plans for improvement; records of pupils' assessment and behaviour; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; and the most recent minutes of the governing body's meetings.