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Mrs Karen Pyman
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Dear Mrs Pyman

Short inspection of Millbrook Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff morale is high. All members of staff who responded to the confidential staff questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed. The resolute leadership that you, your senior leaders and governors provide ensures that the school's work continues to strengthen. You and your staff at all levels share a passion that successfully provides a curriculum that develops pupils' life experiences. You have developed a school culture that encourages calm and orderly conduct and is aspirational for all pupils. Parents and carers that I spoke with feel well informed about their children's learning and are thrilled by the variety of activities their children participate in.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are highly complimentary about the school's work. The Ark, your specialist provision for pupils with complex needs, is oversubscribed. Highly skilled staff provide a nurturing and finely tuned education for pupils who have an education, health and care plan. Similar to other parts of the school, teachers make effective use of what pupils know, can do and understand to ensure that pupils make good progress.

The initiative to serve breakfast bagels in the playground at the beginning of the day is valued by parents and pupils alike and provides a good start to the day. Pupils demonstrate good manners in the way they line up and thank members of staff for their bagels. Good manners are a strong feature at Millbrook. Pupils move around the school safely, hold open doors for others and are polite in lessons. They

have good attitudes towards their learning and wear their uniform with pride. You have persisted in maintaining high standards of pupils' behaviour and conduct. You see rapidly what is needed if ever standards appear to slip. Pupils have positive relationships with their teachers. Pupils strive to improve and take pride in their successes. They follow their teachers' guidance closely and make strong progress as a result.

You and your governors have a clear strategic overview of what works well in the school and what needs to improve further. The Link Academies Collaborative Trust has provided further effective challenge and support for the school. Effective school improvement has resulted in your 2018 cohort of Year 6 pupils making above-average progress to attain above national standards in the combined reading, writing and mathematics assessment tasks. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your systems, training, checks and updates make sure that all staff have the detailed knowledge to ensure that all signs of risk are identified. You and your leaders, including governors, have effective processes in place to check the suitability and appointment of staff and keep this information updated regularly.

You keep detailed records of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. These records show that you are vigilant and persistent in your work with outside agencies in providing pupils with the support they need.

A small minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying and the way in which it is dealt with. However, pupils say that bullying rarely happens but that when it does, it is dealt with well. You have established a strong network of support for pupils in school so that they can share their worries and concerns with confidence. The pastoral support worker carries out important work with pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. Pupils become more settled and feel more positive about coming to school because of their work with her. She provides valuable links with pupils' homes, giving help where and when it is most needed.

Pupils are well versed in how to recognise risks and keep safe because of planned themes, lessons and assemblies. Pupils are alert to the dangers of accessing inappropriate material on the internet because of the clear guidance from their teachers in lessons. The school's personal, social and health programme ensures that pupils know how to keep safe in a range of situations, including when online.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on pupils' writing in key stage 1. This had been identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection. You have been partially successful in remedying this aspect of the school's work. For example, pupils' spelling has improved. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 improved to be

above the national average in 2018. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their writing. Developing pupils' vocabulary through high-quality reading texts and providing valuable first-hand experiences has helped to motivate pupils to write. Similarly, leaders' actions to improve pupils' grammar and punctuation have been successful. However, the progress pupils currently make in writing is less than in reading and mathematics. Together, we agreed that the newly established systems your key stage 1 leader has put in place for the taught sequence of writing should continue.

- The previous inspection report asked that you ensure that more pupils receive the challenge they need to achieve the higher standards. You have been successful in resolving this aspect of the school's work. The most able pupils receive sufficient challenge to reach the higher standards. More pupils are making good progress to reach the higher standards. At key stage 1 in 2018, more pupils reached greater depth (the higher standard) than previously, with a greater proportion of pupils than nationally reaching greater depth in mathematics. The school's work to ensure that pupils develop strong fluency and recall of number facts has been highly effective. Pupils apply their accurate mathematical understanding to solve problems. At the end of key stage 2, more pupils reached greater depth in their combined reading, writing and mathematics compared to others nationally.
- Next, we looked at the effectiveness of the early years provision. Many pupils join the early years with skills below those typically seen for their age. In particular, children's speech and language are often delayed. The provision for learning in the early years is vibrant and exceptionally well ordered. Teachers provide a challenging and stimulating environment. The early years leader provides training for other schools and settings. Children thrive and make strong progress in the early years so that they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Finally, we explored the effectiveness of your actions to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils' overall attendance has improved to be in line with the national figures. You and your staff have worked diligently to ensure that parents understand the importance of their children attending school regularly and the impact that it has on the progress that pupils make. Leaders are acutely aware that attendance is a challenge for some and the pastoral support worker works closely to support families. The school has had significant success in reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school. Although improving, too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to strengthen the teaching of writing, particularly in key stage 1, so that more pupils reach the standards expected for their age
- they build on the improving attendance for the majority of pupils and strengthen the attendance of the small group of pupils who are persistently absent from 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 Swindon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I worked alongside you and your deputy. We visited classes to talk to pupils, observe them at work and to look at their books. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. I also met with your early years leader, your pastoral support worker and the key stage 1 leader. I held discussions with a group of governors and headteacher representatives from the Link Academies Collaborative Trust. I took account of the 51 responses on Parent View as well as the results of the school's own parent questionnaire. I also considered the 84 responses to the online pupil survey as well as the 45 staff responses to their survey.

I considered a range of school information, including your self-evaluation, safeguarding and attendance documents and your current school improvement plans. I met with a group of pupils as well as speaking to pupils at breaktime. I also visited the school's specialist provision (The Ark) and looked at pupils' records.