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Mrs Helen Robinson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Robinson

### **Short inspection of Mount Pleasant Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 October 2014.

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

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

In partnership with the staff, you have fostered a calm, caring and purposeful environment where the school motto of 'believe it, achieve it' is a reality for pupils of all ages. Pupils are resilient and enthusiastic learners who enjoy coming to school.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence at leadership level. This instability in leadership and some changes in staffing led to a decline in pupils' achievement, with groups of pupils in the school making insufficient progress in 2017 and 2018. Leadership is now stable. From the time of your appointment in April 2018, you have acted decisively and sensitively to strengthen teaching and the curriculum and to improve checks on pupils' achievement. You have won the hearts and minds of other leaders and staff. They have embraced the increased levels of accountability and they are working as a team to achieve the school's improvement priorities. Pupils' learning has improved markedly. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils in all year groups are reaching higher standards and making stronger progress than in the past.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2 so that more pupils reached the highest standard in this skill. Leaders and staff have addressed this area of improvement well and actions

are having a positive impact on pupils throughout the school. As a consequence, increasing proportions of pupils are on track to reach greater depth in reading. Teachers provide a suitable level of challenge so that progress for the most able pupils in reading is strong. Pupils learn to draw inferences, make predictions and summarise what they have read. They also learn to carry out their own research in order to increase their knowledge and understanding in different subjects. In one example, pupils took on the role of university professors. They read a range of information and recorded their findings before explaining why the river Nile was important to the ancient Egyptians. Lower-ability pupils, however, are not reading with accuracy and expression. This group of pupils, for example, do not make use of the strategies they have been taught to read and understand unfamiliar words.

Most of the parents and carers I met during the inspection spoke highly about the work of the school. As one parent stated, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds.' Another commented in Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 'My children love learning and come home happy with the things they do.' The parents of children who attend the Nursery and Reception classes were particularly complimentary about the impressive learning gains their children make. Staff in the early years have a comprehensive understanding of the children's learning and development needs. They sequence activities carefully so that pupils secure their understanding of concepts through first-hand experiences, while also learning to explore and discover things for themselves.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils feel well cared for and secure. They told me that staff take the time to listen to them and promptly follow up any worries they may have. Pupils told me that they are grateful for the voice you have given them. The pupil anti-bullying ambassadors take their role seriously. They appreciate meeting with senior leaders to discuss ways in which the school can remain a safe place. Throughout the school year, groups of pupils produce posters and leaflets that focus on themes, such as staying safe online. This information, alongside the safeguarding newsletter, provides both pupils and parents with pertinent information.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Regular training for teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff ensures that everyone knows what to do if they have any concerns. The designated safeguarding leaders monitor pupils' attendance, behaviour and any issues linked to pupils' safety carefully. These leaders report concerns to the relevant agencies and make sure that pupils and their families receive appropriate support.

### **Inspection findings**

- Together with senior leaders, you have transformed the school's approach to recording, tracking and using pupils' achievement information. Senior leaders work well with teachers to make sure that assessments are accurate. They also help teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning and help them to plan suitable activities for pupils of different abilities. This sharper focus on the achievement of

different groups, coupled with appropriate training for staff, high-quality teaching and targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils, is having a positive impact. Work in books and visits to lessons confirm that progress made by girls and disadvantaged pupils is improving, with these pupils increasingly making strong progress.

- You and the staff have improved the way in which reading activities are planned. Through challenging texts and thought-provoking images, the most able pupils are helped to become confident readers who not only build on their existing general knowledge, but also develop an extensive vocabulary. Children in Reception, for instance, showed an accurate understanding of the words 'glided' and 'whirlpool' while discussing an ocean scene. Pupils in Year 5 discussed the poem 'Blackberry Picking'. To help the pupils understand the poem, the teacher encouraged them to recall experiences such as walking through the briar in the forest school provision. This process of recalling a previous experience helped the pupils to draw accurate conclusions about the meaning of words and phrases in the poem.
- When planning mathematics lessons, staff provide 'extra challenge' and 'hungry for more' activities for the most able pupils. These activities give pupils the chance to reason and solve complex problems. However, these approaches are not fully established in all classes. As a result, the most able pupils are not consistently given the chance to deepen their mathematical understanding.
- In 2016/17, the number of fixed-term exclusions at Mount Pleasant was higher than the national average for similar schools. The decision to exclude the small number of pupils was not taken lightly. The latest school records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The parents and pupils I spoke with were positive about behaviour in the school. Pupils are courteous and respectful and thoroughly enjoy talking about their learning. In the school's breakfast club and at breaktimes, pupils play collaboratively. In lessons, they listen carefully and remain focused until their work is complete.
- In addition to the agreed areas of focus above, I also considered the effectiveness of the governing body. Governors are supportive and loyal. In the past, they have not held leaders sufficiently to account for the achievement of pupils. Recent training has helped members of the governing body to increase their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Although they have started to question leaders about the impact of actions on pupils' learning, there is still some way to go before they are able to provide leaders with an effective level of challenge.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the lower-ability pupils learn to read with accuracy, understanding and expression
- teachers help more pupils, and particularly the most able, to work at greater depth in mathematics by providing them with opportunities to reason and solve

complex problems

- governors provide leaders with effective challenge.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the leader with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I spoke with a number of parents at the start of my visit and different groups of pupils throughout the school day. I took account of the 25 views expressed by parents through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 22 free-text comments and the nine responses to the staff survey. Senior leaders and I observed learning in all classes. I listened to pupils read and looked at examples of pupils' reading and mathematics work. I reviewed a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the single central record, minutes of governing body meetings and information about safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.