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25 January 2018

Miss Michelle Harris
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Dear Miss Harris

Short inspection of Mawsley Primary School

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since becoming headteacher in September 2017, you and your new senior leadership team have wasted no time in investigating the effectiveness of all aspects of the school. From this, you have drawn up a clear action plan. You have enthused staff to work with you to begin to address without delay the weaker aspects of provision. Staff are proud to work at Mawsley. The very positive responses they gave to Ofsted's staff questionnaire indicate that they feel united and well led. The teaching of reading has already improved because, for example, you have given staff training and opportunities to visit other schools to see high-quality provision for themselves. You also wanted to ensure that all teachers could judge the standard of their pupils' work accurately. You have appointed a teacher, who is also moderator for the local authority, to meet with colleagues across the school each term regarding this. Teachers discuss their pupils' work with her and are required to justify the judgements they have made. This is raising their skills and improving accuracy in assessment.

You are aware that pupils' outcomes in mathematics have not been high enough. Soon after your appointment, you gave the leader for this subject time to monitor the quality of teaching across the school. This has provided her with an invaluable

opportunity to see where teachers need support and guidance most. You agree that the quality of teaching in this subject is currently variable. The mathematics leader is now helping those who are new to the profession, who feel less confident, or who need to develop their skills to improve.

Mathematics books we looked at together reflect leaders' judgements that not all teachers use their knowledge of what pupils can do to set work that is appropriate for them. A considerable number of the pupils I spoke with during my visit confirmed that they find some of the mathematics work does not challenge them sufficiently. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy lessons in this subject, particularly the recent opportunities for mathematics project days. Pupils' books also show that teachers have not planned sufficient opportunities for them to reason mathematically and problem-solve. The most recent work in their books indicates that they are now being given more of these opportunities, and teachers are planning greater amounts of work that is appropriate for pupils' needs. However, these improvements are not sufficiently embedded throughout all classes and year groups.

You, along with other leaders and members of the governing body, are also fully aware that, though many of the school's overall outcomes have been positive historically, disadvantaged pupils have not made sufficient progress from their starting points. You agree that more needs to be done to ensure that by the end of each academic year greater proportions have reached the standards of other pupils nationally.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to accelerate the progress in writing for pupils of all ages. It is now a strength of the school. Pupils now have many opportunities to write, including at length, and across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 were learning about vitamins in science, and teachers asked them to write a diary imagining they were a sailor suffering from scurvy. Pupils are also now presenting their work neatly in almost all year groups. In the small number of classes where this is less apparent, this is largely because the school is using a new scheme to teach handwriting, and pupils are learning to adjust to this. Pupils' presentation is good and improving across the curriculum.

Pupils' positive approach to their work is reflected in the school's motto, 'Think it, learn it, believe it, achieve it!' The school is a friendly, learning-focused environment where pupils work hard and try their best. During my visit, I saw pupils cooperating positively and sharing their ideas. They spoke eagerly about their work together. I saw no disruption or disengagement from learning by pupils whatsoever. Pupils' attendance is above the national average.

The governing body holds you and senior leaders to account effectively and plays its strategic role well. Governors, like you, are forward thinking and determined. They are, rightly, proud of the drive to address the school's weaknesses and are committed to seeing that all groups of pupils make rapid progress in all subjects. They share the confidence and positivity that is visible in both staff and pupils. You and your staff also have the respect and support of parents and carers. A very large majority of the many who responded to Parent View said that the school is well led

and managed and that they would recommend it to others. As one explained: 'Mawsley Primary School employs wonderfully committed teachers who connect so well with the pupils. My son is very happy there. The school is a very important focal point of the village and it lives up to the expectations placed upon it.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are kept safe at the school because all staff are trained thoroughly. As a result, they know their responsibilities to let you know of any concern they have, and understand how they must do this. They could describe to me a wide variety of signs that might alert them to the potential exploitation or harm to a child. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Written records about any such concerns are clear, well-kept and thorough. These show that you make brisk referrals to external agencies where needed. You and your staff work hard to support pupils whose home circumstances make them vulnerable, including effective work with families.

Pupils I met told me how safe they feel in school. They said that if any bullying and name-calling did take place it was extremely rare indeed because everyone 'gets on very well together'. Where pupils do fall out, or if they are worried, staff quickly deal with it. Relationships in school are respectful, and pupils are polite to visitors, adults and to each other. They told me that the school teaches them about how to stay safe online and about other dangers such as electricity and strangers. Pupils learn to become reflective about risks because staff discuss these things with them in an age-appropriate way. For example, they ask pupils to indicate to them before a school trip that they know to take care near roads and never to wander off.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' writing is consistently of a high quality. It is characterised by creativity and imaginative, ambitious vocabulary and structure. Pupils know how to write well for different purposes and audiences. They are taught well in this subject and, as a result, they become confident and keen to show their skills in writing. Considerably greater proportions than the national averages consistently attain both the expected standard and that of greater depth in both key stages 1 and 2.
- Teachers did not adapt their teaching in mathematics well enough to the revised national curriculum when it was introduced. As a result, pupils' achievement in mathematics has fallen and is currently too low. Last year's results were below the national averages at key stages 1 and 2. The mathematics leader correctly identifies that this was because the approach to mathematics was too inconsistent between classes, and that many staff were not giving their pupils sufficient opportunities to solve problems and to reason mathematically. In addition, staff were not all adjusting the work they planned to meet the different needs of pupils. You and leaders have begun to address this, and there are promising recent signs of improvement. However, you agree that actions need to continue so that all pupils make rapid progress in mathematics.
- The relatively small numbers of disadvantaged pupils are not making fast enough progress academically. Too few of these pupils are making accelerated progress

so that they attain at least the standards expected for their age. You have identified the barriers to achievement for these pupils and are monitoring how the pupil premium is spent to ensure that it is used wisely. You have ensured that a teacher has analysed in depth the reading skills of each pupil so you can provide teachers with good strategies to help them. In addition, you plan to meet shortly with the head of an outstanding school to glean additional ideas that have proved successful in raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils receive effective support and challenge so that they make consistently stronger progress and more of them achieve or exceed the standard expected for their age
- guidance for teachers is intensified so their mathematics teaching is consistently good, with teachers adjusting work appropriately for pupils' needs and giving them many opportunities to solve problems and to explain their reasoning.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the vice chair of the governing body, the deputy and assistant headteachers and subject leaders for English and mathematics. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and any free-text comments. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils. We visited classes together in all key stages in the school. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a large group of them at breaktime and looked at samples of pupils' work with you. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.